OPINION: CHINA'S ARTIFICIAL SUN P.33 | FEATURES: EMERGENCY SPACE LAUNCH P.38

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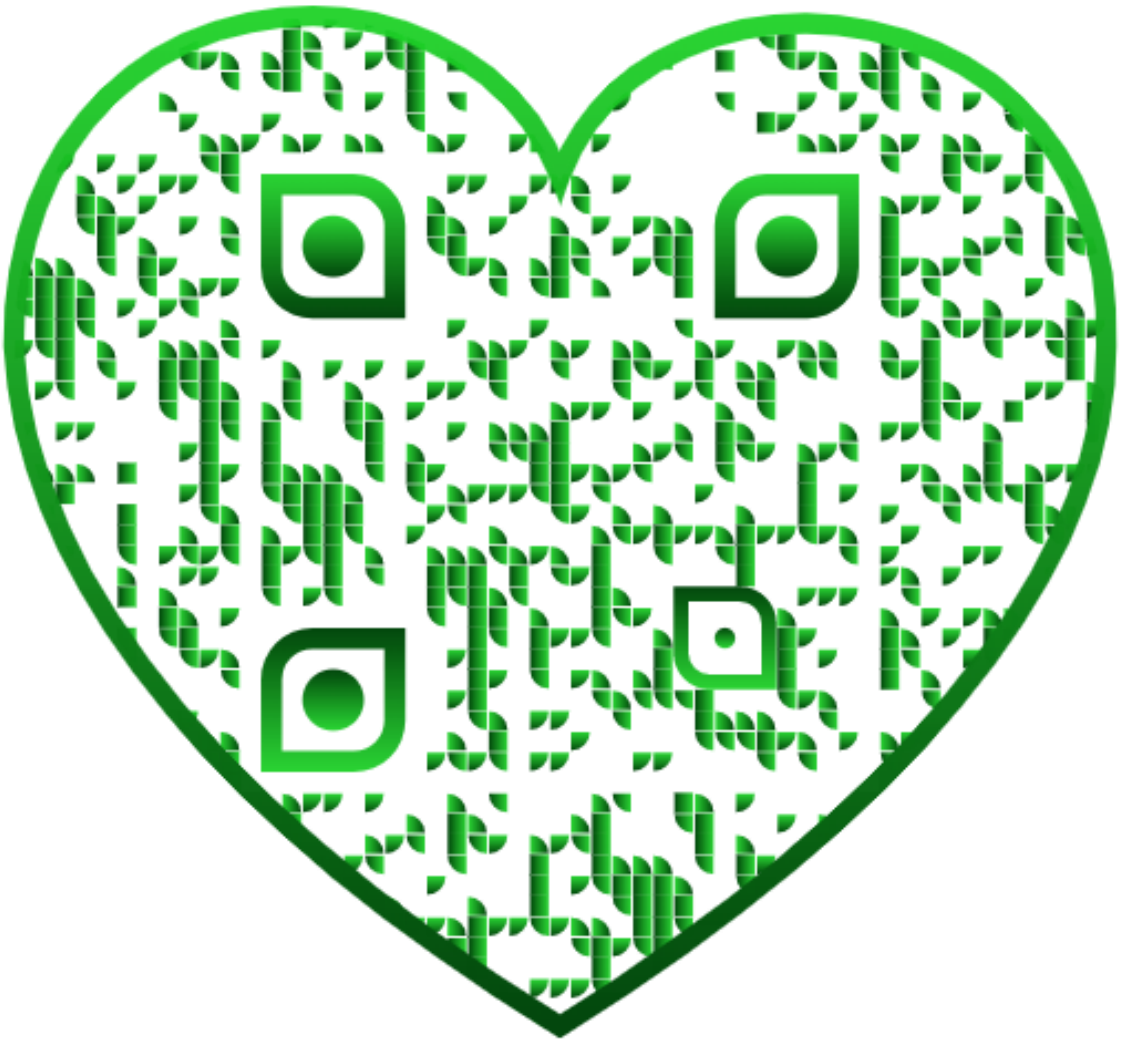

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Cover Photo: A judge affixes a pin representing the court to his lapel before a hearing (XINHUA)

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A Foundation of Fairness

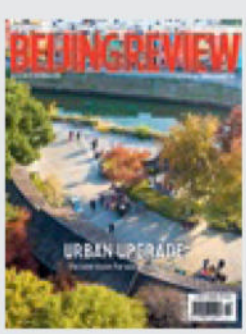
Since becoming general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee in 2012, Xi Jinping has given top priority to the rule of law. In improving China's legal systems and rigorously exercising law-based governance, he has put forward a series of new ideas, new thinking and new strategies as guides to action, giving shape to Xi Jinping Thought on the Rule of Law.

Five years ago, the Central Conference on Law-Based Governance proposed Xi Jinping Thought on the Rule of Law for the first time and elaborated on it with the following 11 points:

- upholding overall Party leadership in law-based governance;
- upholding a people-centered approach;
- upholding the rule of law under socialism with Chinese characteristics;
- upholding Constitution-based governance and exercise of state power;
- upholding the rule of law in modernizing the state system and capacity for governance;
- developing a system of socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics;
- pursuing coordinated progress in law-based governance, exercise of state power and government administration, and integrating the rule of law for the country, the government and society;
- ensuring sound lawmaking, strict law enforcement, impartial administration of justice and the observance of law by all;
- taking a coordinated approach to the rule of law at home and in matters involving foreign parties;
- developing a force of high-caliber legal personnel with moral integrity and professional competence; and
- making sure that leading officials, though small in number, play a key role in implementing the rule of law.

Xi Jinping Thought on the Rule of Law is an important component of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, a philosophy that encapsulates President Xi's vision for China's governance. It serves as the fundamental guideline for implementing the rule of law across all fields.

China aims to largely complete the building of a law-based country, government and society by 2035. Therefore, it is necessary to accelerate the improvement of socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics and the establishment of systems to ensure it's put into effect and oversee its implementation. A well-defined system of Party rules and regulations must also be in place to strengthen the CPC's self-governance and ensure it can always lead by example. **BR**



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DUTY-FREE DEBUT

Customers browse duty free products at the newly opened Xi'an Downtown Duty Free Shop in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, on November 26—the first downtown duty-free shop in northwest China. Eligibility for duty-free discounts extends to individuals holding valid entry and/or exit documents, provided they have purchased outbound flight or cruise tickets within the following 60 days.

XINHUA

New Home, New Life

A flood-affected family moves into their new home at a resettlement site in Maliantan Village of Mapo Town in Yuzhong County, Gansu Province, on December 1. The county was hit by mountain torrents triggered by torrential rains this August. According to a reconstruction plan made by the local government, six resettlement sites for 325 families are under construction and disaster-affected people are moving into new homes in batches.

Average Life Expectancy

China's average life expectancy reached 79 years in 2024, according to a report released on December 2 by the National Health Commission.

China's 2024 health statistics bulletin highlighted continued improvements in both maternal and child health, with maternal deaths falling to 14.3 per 100,000 and infant deaths dropping to 4 per 1,000.

China's healthcare resources continued to grow steadily. By the end of 2024, the country had 1,093,551 medical and health institutions, an increase of 22,766 from the previous year. The number of health professionals reached 13.02 million, 531,000 more than in 2023.

The report also revealed that China's medical institutions had handled 10.15 billion patient visits in 2024, an increase of 600 million from the previous year, reflecting both expanded service capacity and improved efficiency.

Progress, notably, was made in controlling medical costs. The average hospital inpatient stay cost 9,870 yuan ($1,394) in 2024, down 4.3 percent from 2023 at current prices and 4.5 percent after adjusting for inflation. Outpatient visits averaged 361 yuan ($51) last year, falling 0.2 percent at current prices and 0.4 percent in real terms.

AIDS Prevention

The overall prevalence of AIDS remains at a low level in China, with transmission through blood transfusion largely curbed, and mother-to-child and drug-injection transmission effectively controlled, according to the National Disease Control and Prevention Administration.

December 1 is World AIDS Day. On the occasion, Xia Gang, deputy director of the administration, said that China has made progress in AIDS control and treatment through 40 years of persistent effort, with both treatment coverage and virus inhibition rates exceeding 95 percent.

With an improved prevention and treatment system, upgraded technical methods, and more accessible and convenient services, the mortality rate has decreased by 86 percent since 2003, Xia noted.

An AIDS prevention and treatment plan for the 2024-30 period set the goals of bringing the overall infection rate below 0.2 percent in China by 2030, and ensuring that over 95 percent of those infected are diagnosed and aware of their infections in a timely manner.

Civil Service Exam

On November 30, China held its first national civil service examination since raising the maximum age of eligibility from 35 to 38 and to 43 for holders of master's and doctoral degrees.

More than 3.7 million people took the annual exam in a bid to secure positions with the country's central authorities and their branches, roughly 98 applicants per available post. Approximately 70 percent of these vacancies are reserved for fresh college graduates, according to authorities.

Removing Fire Hazards

The State Council Work Safety Committee has issued a circular requesting inspections of the country's high-rise buildings to identify and remove major fire hazards, the Ministry of Emergency Management said on November 29.

High-rise buildings undergoing exterior or interior renovation or interior decoration will be examined in particular to strengthen fire safety management and safeguard lives and property.

According to the ministry, inspections will be made to identify and weed out flammable and combustible materials used for exterior wall insulation systems, and prohibited materials such as bamboo (wood) scaffolding and non-flame-retardant safety nets, and to ensure firefighting facilities and equipment such as fire hydrants, automatic sprinklers and fire alarms are in place.

All regions are requested to organize enterprises and institutions to conduct comprehensive self-inspections, and competent government departments should also conduct spot checks. For any identified safety hazards, immediate rectification measures should be taken, according to the ministry.

Tackling Wage Arrears

The Supreme People's Procuratorate (SPP) has released a circular to launch a targeted campaign against arrears of wages for migrant workers and other disadvantaged groups, Xinhua News Agency reported on November 28.

Per the circular, procuratorial authorities nationwide should combat the malicious practice of

wage arrears in accordance with the law and hand down corresponding penalties in a strict manner.

Efforts to help migrant workers in need recover their income arrears should be sustained throughout the whole campaign to ensure that they are paid in a prioritized, prompt and full manner, according to the circular.

It also urged redoubling support for migrant workers in need to press prosecutions in court and enhancing oversight on industries such as construction, online order delivery and public sanitation, where arrears of wages occur most frequently.

The circular also specified efforts to facilitate negotiations and settlement between enterprises and migrant workers where possible, and proactively provide legal aid for those in need.

Sturgeon Breeding

China has for the first time successfully bred a third filial generation of Chinese sturgeon entirely through artificial propagation, the China Three Gorges Corp. (CTGC) announced on November 27, marking a significant stage in the conservation and large-scale breeding of this rare species.

The third filial generation sturgeon were recently born at CTGC's Yangtze River Rare Fish Conservation Center. The parent fish involved—a 13-year-old female and 14-year-old male—were second filial generation sturgeon cultivated by the corporation's Yangtze River Biodiversity Research Center.

To ensure breeding quality, researchers began a strict selection process early this year, as well as months of nutritional enhancement and environmental simulation. Artificial induction and fertilization were conducted on November 6 and 7, during the optimal breeding period. Monitoring showed a fertilization rate of over 95 percent. After five days of incubation, approximately 112,000 fry were obtained.

Endemic to China, the Chinese sturgeon is a rare migratory fish and one of the most primitive extant species, often described as a "living fossil." The first filial generation of Chinese sturgeon was bred from wild parent fish in the 1980s, producing the second filial generation successfully in 2009.

New Cultural Relics

Xizang Autonomous Region has discovered 3,346 new cultural relic sites during the second phase of the fourth national cultural relics census, raising the region's total to 7,623, its regional cultural relics bureau said on November 27.

The survey, which began in April 2024, covered all county-level units across Xizang. The relics discovered at the highest altitude were rock paintings found in Sagya County, located at an altitude of 5,304 meters.

Newly documented relics include ancient tombs, architecture, cave temples, stone carvings and modern historical sites. Special investigations were also conducted in 21 border counties—adding 254 relics related to territorial defense and the garrisoning of borders.

Authorities plan to expand efforts to document relics in ancient urban areas.

XINHUA

Duty-Free Shopping

Customers shop at a duty-free shopping mall in Sanya, Hainan Province, on November 30. Haikou Customs supervised a total of 2.38 billion yuan ($337 million) in duty-free sales from November 1 to 30, the first month after the implementation of the expanded offshore duty-free policy, up 27.1 percent year on year.

XINHUA

Pet Economy

A staff member assembles a pet home at the showroom of Caoxian Penghui Crafts Co. Ltd. in Caoxian County, Shandong Province, on November 28. Caoxian has established a complete industrial chain covering pet home furnishings, food and apparel.

Increasing Liquidity

The People's Bank of China (PBC), the country's central bank, injected 1 trillion yuan ($141 billion) through its medium-term lending facility (MLF) in November and withdrew 900 billion yuan ($127 billion), resulting in a net injection of 100 billion yuan ($14 billion), it said in a statement on December 2.

The MLF tool was introduced in 2014 to help commercial and policy banks maintain liquidity by allowing them to borrow from the PBC, using securities as collateral.

In addition to the MLF operations, the PBC also reported that its open market trading of treasury bonds had yielded a net injection of 50 billion yuan ($7 billion), and that central treasury cash management operations contributed a net injection of 80 billion yuan ($11 billion).

Through seven-day reverse repo operations, the central bank injected 4.8 trillion yuan ($679 billion) through these agreements but withdrew 5.36 trillion yuan ($758 billion), resulting in a net withdrawal of about 556 billion yuan ($78 billion).

A reverse repo is a process in which the central bank purchases securities from commercial banks through a bidding process, with an agreement to sell them back in the future.

AI Models

Chinese AI startup DeepSeek officially released two new models on December 1—DeepSeek-V3.2 and its high-compute variant, DeepSeek-V3.2-Speciale.

By implementing a robust reinforcement learning protocol and scaling post-training computation, DeepSeek-V3.2 performs comparably to GPT-5, according to the company. The AI model balances high computational efficiency while maintaining superior reasoning and agent performance.

Competition among leading global tech companies in the AI model arena is intensifying. In August, U.S. tech firm OpenAI launched its flagship model, GPT-5, describing it as its smartest and fastest model to date. And in November, Google released its latest AI system, Gemini-3.0-Pro.

The high-compute DeepSeek-V3.2-Speciale surpasses GPT-5 and exhibits reasoning proficiency comparable to Gemini-3.0-Pro, according to a technical report that was released by the company.

A key technical breakthrough is the DeepSeek Sparse Attention mechanism, which substantially reduces computational complexity while preserving model performance in long-context scenarios.

Founded in July 2023, DeepSeek focuses on the research and development of large language models and multimodal AI technologies.

Container Throughput

The annual container throughput of the Ningbo-Zhoushan Port in Zhejiang Province surpassed 40 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) for the first time on December 2, marking a new milestone for the world's busiest port in terms of cargo throughput.

According to Zhejiang Seaport Group, the Ningbo-Zhoushan Port has ranked first globally in annual cargo throughput for 16 consecutive years. Despite being a late starter in container operations, its growth has accelerated significantly—its annual container throughput rose from 10 million TEUs to 20 million in seven years, and then jumped to 30 million in the space of only six years, before surging to 40 million in just four years.

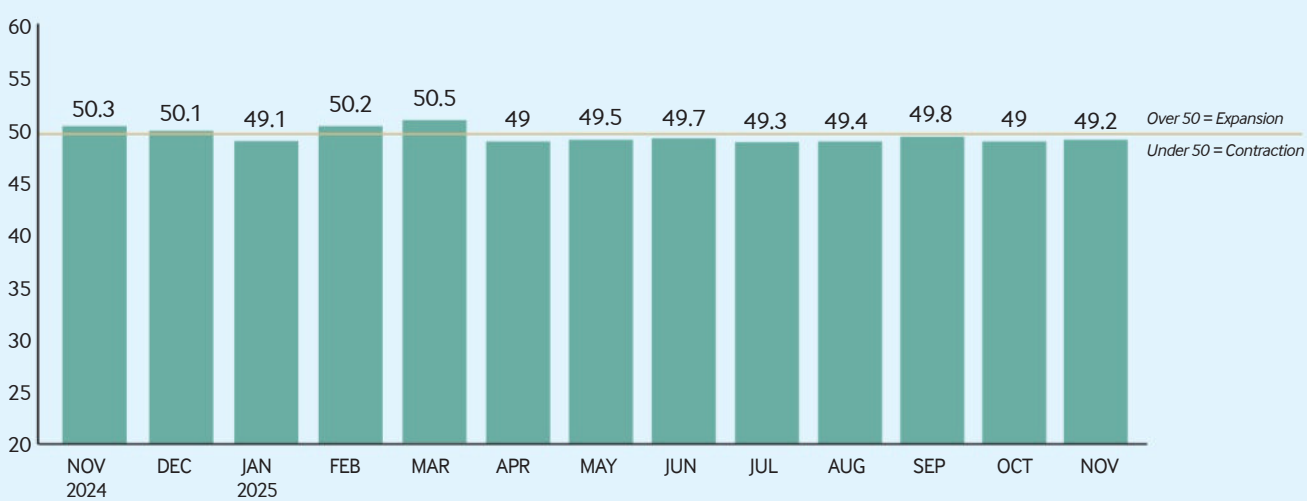
The Ningbo-Zhoushan Port has built an extensive maritime network, with more than 300 container shipping routes linking over 600 ports in more than 200 countries and regions. It now operates over 210 berths for ships of 10,000 tons or above, including more than 135 berths for vessels over 50,000 tons, making it one of the world's top ports in terms of large and ultra-large deep-water berth capacity.

Embodied Intelligence

China is working to ensure the sound, orderly development of the embodied intelligence industry, according to the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), the country's

NUMBERS

China's Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)



top economic planner.

The industry—exemplified by humanoid robots—is experiencing rapid expansion in China, NDRC spokesperson Li Chao told a press conference on November 27. "At the same time, humanoid robots have yet to fully mature in terms of technological pathways, business models and application scenarios," she said.

Li noted that China is home to a growing roster of over 150 humanoid robot companies, more than half of which are startups or cross-sector entrants.

To provide sound guidance for the embodied intelligence industry, the NDRC is working with related departments to strengthen policy support, accelerate technological breakthroughs and advance the application of research outcomes, the spokesperson said.

She said the commission will work to establish industry standards and evaluation systems while improving entry and exit mechanisms for the sector, aiming to foster a fair competition market environment.

Efforts will also be made to develop infrastructure for embodied intelligence, promote the nationwide integration of related technologies and industry resources, and expedite real-life applications, Li added.

The market scale of China's embodied intelligence industry is expected to reach 400 billion yuan ($56 billion) in 2030 and exceed 1 trillion yuan ($141 billion) in 2035, according to a report from the Development Research Center of the State Council, China's highest state administrative organ.

Smart Factories

China has built more than 7,000 advanced smart factories and become the world's largest base for the application of intelligent manufacturing, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology announced on November 27.

Xin Guobin, Vice Minister of Industry and Information Technology, revealed the data in his speech at the 2025 World Intelligent Manufacturing Conference held from November 27 to 29 in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province.

In 2024, China conducted a gradient (progressive) cultivation campaign for the country's smart factories. The government has classified smart factories into four tiers based on technological maturity and integration depth, namely basic-level, advanced-level, excellence-level and pioneer-level.

According to Xin, through sector-specific measures and a gradient cultivation approach, China has also established over 500 excellence-level and 15 pioneer-level smart factories.

Xin said China has developed a global supply capacity for systematic solutions. The industrial scale of China's intelligent manufacturing equipment, industrial software and systematic solutions has exceeded 4.5 trillion yuan ($635 billion).

Suppliers of intelligent manufacturing systematic solutions in sectors such as complete vehicles, power batteries and petrochemicals are accelerating their global expansion, with service networks covering major manufacturing regions worldwide.

Industrial Profits

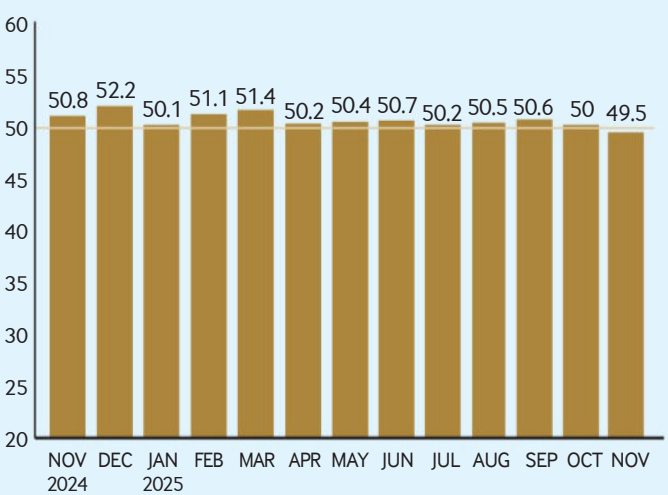
Profits of China's major industrial firms grew 1.9 percent year on year in the first 10 months of 2025, extending a solid recovery that has continued for three consecutive months since August, official data showed on November 27.

Industrial firms with an annual main business revenue of at least 20 million yuan ($2.8 million) saw their combined profits total 5.95 trillion yuan ($842 billion) during the January-October period, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

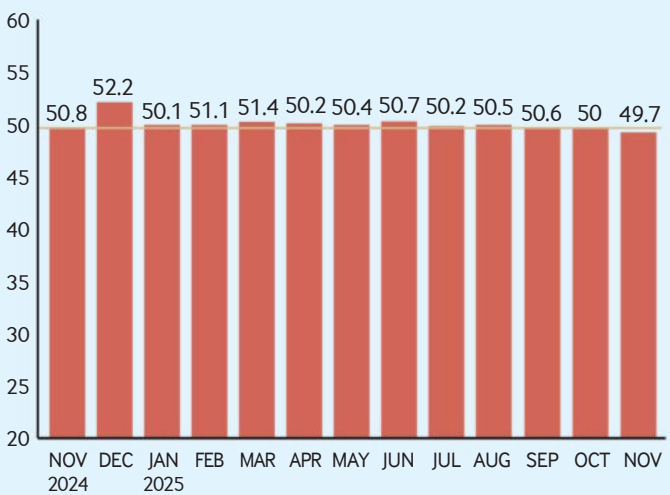
NBS statistician Yu Weining attributed the steady improvement to efforts to strengthen the domestic economy and improve the interplay between domestic and international economic flows, which helped stabilize industrial profit growth and advance high-quality industrial development.

Industrial revenues continued to expand, with major industrial firms reporting a 1.8-percent rise in operating revenue during this period, creating favorable conditions for profit recovery, Yu said.

China's Comprehensive PMI



China's Non-Manufacturing PMI



(Source: *National Bureau of Statistics*)

VENEZUELA

President Nicolas Maduro on stage at a rally in Caracas on December 1. Maduro told supporters the country does not want "a slave's peace" and that a U.S. military deployment has been "testing" his country for months

UNITED STATES

Police patrol a shooting site in Stockton, a city in northern California, on November 30. At least four people were killed and 10 others injured in the shooting during a family gathering on the night of November 29

JAPAN

Keru Magosaki, a former official of the Foreign Ministry, speaks during a gathering of several lawmakers and prominent scholars in Tokyo on December 2, held to urge Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi to retract her recent erroneous remarks on Taiwan

LAOS

A military parade during the celebration for the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Lao People's Democratic Republic in Vientiane on December 2

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

President Lee Jae Myung at a press conference in Seoul on December 3. Lee said that his government will designate December 3 as People's Sovereignty Day to mark the overcoming of the martial law crisis in 2024

INDONESIA

Disaster relief efforts underway at a flood-hit village in North Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatra, on December 2. The death toll from recent floods and landslides across three provinces on Sumatra Island had risen to 712, with 507 people still missing as of the day of printing

ACTRESS SHINES ON MULTIPLE FRONTS

On December 1, **Song Jia** won the Best Actress award at the inaugural Singapore International Chinese Film Golden Lion Awards for her performance in *Her Story*, a female-driven comedy that premiered in 2024.

This victory adds to Song's growing collection of accolades. Earlier, on November 15, she won the Best Actress award at the 38th Golden Rooster Awards for her role in the same movie, which tells the story of a resilient single mother.

Despite being newly established, the Singapore golden lion awards featured a prestigious jury including veteran Hong Kong actor and moviemaker Donnie Yen, making Song's win a meaningful international recognition.

The 45-year-old actress is also well known for her portrayal of Zhang Guimei, a female principal dedicated to helping girls in poverty-stricken areas in the TV series *She and Her Girls*.

The Bus Bulletin

Workers' Daily

December 3

A No.181 bus in Chongqing has become an unexpected focus of public attention. Instead of advertisements, its exterior displays the photographs, last-seen locations and basic identifying details of 32 missing children from across China. The bus company says the route was chosen deliberately. It passes several of the city's busiest tourist spots, thereby increasing the chances that someone might recognize a face and provide a useful lead.

Although it touches only a small fraction of China's missing children cases and its impacts are still to be tested, the campaign reflects a broader push to make the most out of public spaces. Cities are converting space under flyovers into car parks or children's playgrounds, and kindergartens facing declining enrollment—driven by falling birth rates—are being repurposed as nursing homes.

The effective use of such public resources requires coordination across all sectors. The missing children campaign in Chongqing arose from a joint effort by the bus operator, an advertising firm and a nonprofit website dedicated to reuniting missing children with their families. Such initiatives show that when different parts of society pool their efforts, the result can be smoother-running communities and, in time, greater wellbeing for all.

Guardrails for Gamers

China Newsweek

November 24

Gaming disorder refers to a pattern of gaming behavior marked by poor control over gaming, a growing preference for gaming over other interests or daily activities, and continued play even when it leads to clear negative consequences.

A nationwide survey conducted by the Shanghai Mental Health Center in 2019 found that while most Chinese adolescents use the Internet in a moderate way, about 15 percent show high-risk patterns of use and 5 percent meet the clinical criteria for

"Such practices help children with disabilities enhance their social adaptability and independent living skills, improve the social flexibility of other children, enable all children to learn better, build an inclusive society and reduce discrimination."

UN Children's Fund education specialist **Chen Xuefeng**, commenting on a disability-inclusive education program jointly launched with the Ministry of Education that has covered 1.1 million children

"What surprised me most was how easy everything was—booking with my passport, paying by phone, staff speaking fluent English. We'll definitely be coming back soon."

Nicolas de Fermor, a French skier, commenting on his snow season trip to Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region in an interview with Xinhua News Agency

gaming disorder. Many of these young people never seek help. Some become so socially withdrawn that they seldom leave home, making long-term treatment especially challenging.

On one side are children drawn to the instant rewards and sense of achievement in virtual worlds; on the other are parents growing increasingly anxious and helpless as their children's addiction deepens. Around this dynamic has grown an industry worth nearly 70 billion yuan ($10 billion), offering everything from parenting workshops to rehabilitation camps for young gamers—many of which lack medical evidence for their methods.

Amid the proliferation of uncertified programs, a more clinically grounded model of care is also taking shape. At Beijing Huilongguan Hospital, a dedicated treatment center for gaming disorder, treatment often begins by easing withdrawal symptoms through structured role-playing activities. These sessions are designed to help patients experience positive emotions, reduce loneliness and rebuild real-world connections that can replace the gratification they seek online.

Experts emphasize that treatment for gaming addiction is not about banning games altogether. The goal is to restore control, minimize harm and help young people reengage with the world around them.

School's Out for Snow

Ce.cn

December 1

Northern regions across China are introducing snow breaks this winter as part of a broader effort to spur domestic tourism and encourage consumer spending. In Altay and Urumqi in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, elementary and secondary schools have given students five consecutive days off from December 1. Northeast China's Jilin Province has followed suit, designating December 3-7 as a province-wide snow break.

In the past, the traditional winter holiday was the only time when families could experience winter sports, producing sharp surges in visitor numbers and a heavy strain on local infrastructure. Staggered snow breaks are intended to spread out demand and give children more time to enjoy ice and snow activities.

Rather than simply extending time off, local governments are pairing the new break with policy bundles aimed at unlocking more winter tourism spending. Jilin, for example, is offering free entry for students and discounts for parents at 39 certified ski resorts and ice rinks, while Urumqi has launched a range of packages covering everything from winter sports trips to educational tours.

The newly introduced snow break may help draw a new generation into winter sports and support the long-term growth of the country's winter tourism market.

ONLINE EDUCATOR FACING SCRUTINY

Influencer **Zhang Xuefeng** has recently become the subject of disciplinary action by cyberspace authorities for using vulgarities during livestream sessions, and his accounts on platforms including Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok, were temporarily suspended.

In a statement, the authorities emphasized that Internet influencers bear significant social responsibility and should adhere to laws and regulations, maintain civility online and use their influence appropriately. Following the penalty, Zhang promised not to violate the rules again.

A graduate of Zhengzhou University, Zhang rose to fame in 2016 with a viral video titled *Seven-Minute Guide to 34 Top-Tier Universities*. In 2021, he relocated from Beijing to Suzhou and founded an education company offering services ranging from academic planning and career guidance to book publishing and e-commerce livestreaming.

"Items that provide emotional value are particularly favored by foreign consumers."

Huang Changchao, head of Yiwu's cultural products industry association, speaking about the growing popularity of cultural products in overseas markets. Yiwu, Zhejiang Province, is known as "the world's supermarket"

"The super-powered performance of Disney's *Zootopia 2* has given the current year-end movie season an inspiring and uplifting start."

Lai Li, a market analyst at film ticketing, production and distribution giant Maoyan, in an interview with Xinhua

Senior citizens ask a staff member (center) from Xinghua City People's Procuratorate in Jiangsu Province about pension-related legal questions at a park on October 27

COVER STORY

FROM CODE TO CARE

China's rule of law translates principle into protection By Lu Yan

XINHUA

As both a lawyer and a mother of an infant, Wei Meng read the news with keen attention. The amendment to China's Food Safety Law, which was passed in September and took effect on December 1, felt personal.

The new rules zero in on two key areas: tightening supervision of liquid infant formula and creating a licensing system for transporting bulk liquid foods by road. For Wei the mother, the first part was an immediate relief. Regarding the ready-to-drink formula her baby sometimes relies on, the law now explicitly bans its production through sub-packaging and requires strict product registration, to make sure the product follows a verified recipe and standard. Sub-packaging is the practice of repacking a larger, bulk quantities of a product into smaller, more convenient or more marketable units. The new rule prevents product quality being compromised during the sub-packaging process, building a legal shield around the product her child consumes.

For Wei the lawyer, the amendment didn't just state a goal, but also engineered a solution. By instituting a mandatory licensing system for the bulk transport of liquid foodstuffs and clearly delineating the responsibilities of consignors, carriers and receivers, the law effectively closed a significant regulatory loophole. Its stringent prohibition on falsifying transport or cleaning records, reinforced by substantial penalties, demonstrated the legislators' astute understanding of potential systemic vulnerabilities. In her view, this amendment—one of several since the law's inception in 2009—signaled a legal framework capable of learning from experience and dynamically adapting to emerging risks.

"As both the primary guardian of my family's health and a legal professional, the latest amendment to the Food Safety Law demonstrates how a well-crafted law can align personal wellbeing with public order," Wei told *Beijing Review*. "It's a powerful example of the rule of law functioning not as an abstract concept, but as a tangible guardian of society's most fundamental unit: the family."

The recent amendment to the Food Safety Law along with the introduction and amendment of other laws, are vivid examples of how the rule of law functions in today's China—not as a static set of rules, but as a living system that responds to new challenges.

"The people-centered philosophy of law-based governance is being translated into reality through a series of tangible measures in aspects of legislative, law enforcement and judicial practices," Yuan Gang, Vice Dean of the School of Law at China University of Political Science and Law, told *Beijing Review*. ▶▶

Law-based governance

The concept of the rule of law is deeply rooted in China's long history of governance. From the ancient legalist principle of "governing the state according to law" to the Confucian emphasis on order and righteousness, China has long recognized that clear, stable rules are essential to social harmony and state stability.

In contemporary China, the rule of law has evolved into a cornerstone of socialist modernization. It is a natural progression of China's own governance traditions—now integrated with Marxist legal theory and adapted to national conditions. The Constitution of the People's Republic of China establishes that the country shall practice law-based governance and build a socialist state under the rule of law; all state organs and armed forces, all political parties and social organizations and all enterprises and public institutions must abide by the Constitution and the law.

Since the launch of reform and opening up in the late 1970s, China has systematically built a legal system that covers all critical aspects of economic and social life, from property rights and contract enforcement to environmental protection and consumer safety.

China's rule-of-law process entered a new chapter in 2020, when the Communist Party of China (CPC) convened its first-ever Central Conference on Law-Based Governance, formally establishing Xi Jinping Thought on the Rule of Law as the guiding philosophy in this field. This was a historic milestone in achieving the long-term goal of building a socialist country under the rule of law.

XINHUA

A staff member from the justice department of Heihe City in Heilongjiang Province distributes a handbook of legal knowledge for Russian citizens in China to Russian tourists at a foreign affairs-related legal service station on December 10, 2024

Since the 18th CPC National Congress convened in 2012, Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee, Chinese President and Chairman of the Central Military Commission, has put forward a series of new concepts, ideas and strategies that have shaped China's approach to law-based governance.

He gives answers to key questions such as why law-based governance in all respects should be pursued in the new era and how to achieve it, offering fundamental guidance for the steady and long-term advancement of law-based governance in China.

Under his guidance, a series of national plans, such as the plan to build the rule of law in China (2020-25) and guidelines for building a law-based government and law-based society, have provided a blueprint for advancing law-based governance.

In October, the Fourth Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee put forward its recommendations for formulating the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30). The key document highlights the significant role of the rule of law in China's modernization endeavors and the realization of national rejuvenation, calling for stronger mechanisms for resolving administrative disputes and accelerating the development of its legal system and capabilities relating to foreign affairs.

In his recent instructions on comprehensively advancing the rule of law, Xi emphasized that China must fully advance sound legislation, strict law enforcement, impartial administration of justice and observance of the law by all, and place all aspects of state governance under the rule of law in order to provide a strong legal guarantee for building a strong country and advance national rejuvenation on all fronts through Chinese modernization.

Xi's instructions were conveyed at the Central Conference on Law-Based Governance in Beijing from November 17 to 18. He also highlighted the necessity of safeguarding and promoting social fairness and justice, and comprehensively advancing rule of law in all aspects of the country's work.

Principles to practice

According to Yuan, the concept of the rule of law is evolving from abstract principle into lived reality

across China, guided by a governance philosophy that places people's needs at its core. This shift is reflected not only in the refinement of laws but in their tangible implementation—whether in safeguarding vulnerable groups, innovating administrative enforcement, advancing judicial fairness or fostering a culture of legality in everyday life.

A notable example can be found in recent legislation. A law on building a barrier-free living environment, which took effect on September 1, 2023, underscores the commitment to improving the daily lives of people with disabilities and the elderly. The law also extends its protections to other groups with accessibility needs. It mandates that newly built, reconstructed or expanded residential buildings, public facilities, transportation infrastructure and urban and rural roads must comply with barrier-free construction standards.

Official statistics indicate that China is home to more than 85 million people with disabilities. This reality makes the implementation of such legislation not merely a matter of legal compliance, but a vital step toward social inclusion and equitable living.

On the legislative front, at a September 12 press conference in Beijing, Shen Chunyao, Director of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee's Legislative Affairs Commission, highlighted further progress on advancing the socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25). Since 2021, the NPC and its Standing Committee have revised 63 existing laws, passed 35 decisions on legal and major issues, and issued one legislative interpretation.

China currently has 306 laws in force, along with more than 600 administrative and supervisory regulations, and over 14,000 local regulations, Shen noted.

In the field of law enforcement, China has been advancing a paradigm shift toward more efficient and people-centered regulatory practices, with reforms aimed at standardizing administrative procedures and enhancing their responsiveness to public needs. Key initiatives include the "comprehensive single-inspection" model in the field of market regulation, which consolidates multiple regulatory checks into one coordinated visit to reduce redundancies and minimize disruptions to businesses; the "flexible enforcement list," which exempts minor or first-time violations from penalties to emphasize guidance over punishment; and the introduction of unified templates used by administrative agencies to ensure lawful, consistent and traceable procedures, thereby enhancing efficiency and transparency.

"A tangible example of this people-centered approach can be observed if a driver enters an unfamiliar area and fails to follow the planned traffic route or parks improperly. They will promptly receive a text message reminder instead of an immediate fine or penalty notice," Yuan further explained.

China has also established a comprehensive legal system relating to foreign affairs. According to a report introduced in May by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Institute of International Law, as of December 25, 2024, China had 54 laws specifically designed to address foreign affairs, and more than 150 others contain provisions involving foreign affairs.

To enhance its capacity of legal services in foreign affairs, China has actively deepened international legal exchanges and cooperation. At a press conference held on September 8 in Beijing focused on promoting socialist rule of law and judicial administration and serving high-quality development during the 14th Five-Year Plan period, Minister of Justice He Rong highlighted concrete steps in this area. She noted that China has signed 91 treaties on mutual legal assistance and 19 agreements on the transfer of sentenced persons, while handling over 16,000 international judicial assistance cases.

Future prospects

China's efforts to build a people-centered rule of law system have achieved marked progress, yet practical challenges remain. Yuan notes that in legislation, certain laws addressing public welfare—such as elderly care services and public health emergency response—remain underdeveloped or overly general, limiting their ability to meet specific public needs.

In enforcement, disparities persist across regions and sectors, with some remote areas lacking sufficient capacity and occasionally applying rigid or inconsistent penalties, undermining fairness and predictability.

In the judicial domain, courts continue to face high caseloads with limited staff, resulting in extended trial periods in some cases, and measures to improve legal accessibility at the local level need further enhancement in reach and convenience.

Moreover, public legal awareness varies across urban and rural communities, and trust in modern dispute resolution mechanisms remains underdeveloped, posing ongoing challenges to fostering a society grounded in the rule of law.

Looking ahead, Yuan emphasized that efforts will focus on creating a modern, accessible public legal service system for all—urban and rural alike—through better resource allocation, standardized procedures and expanded digital platforms. "This will help ensure equal access to legal support, enhance public trust and deepen the people-oriented nature of the rule of law," he concluded. **BR**

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COVER STORY

The Unblinking Eye

China is shaping a new era of intelligent law enforcement

By Zhang Yage

Yongxing County in Hunan Province was once plagued by mining theft. Illegal miners would exploit the darkness of night and rugged terrain to extract minerals while dodging traditional patrols. Detection was slow, evidence hard to secure. Today, things have changed. A network of electronic devices with infrared vision and smart algorithms now monitors high-risk zones around the clock. These devices can instantly detect these illegal activities, and send real-time alerts as well as related video and location information directly to police officers' phones.

Across China, from protecting mineral resources to safeguarding drinking water, from monitoring atmospheric pollution to managing urban disorder, a profound transformation is underway. Law enforcement is being rewired, moving from a reliance on foot patrols and sporadic checks to a new paradigm powered by data, AI and interconnected systems.

The policy blueprint for this transformation is clear. As Zhao Qunying, former Director of the Bureau of Ecological and Environmental Enforcement at the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, articulated in an article published in *Environmental Protection* earlier this year, the current landscape demands innovation.

"With the rapid advancement of technology, ecological and environmental violations are committed with more hi-tech equipment," Zhao noted. He also highlighted challenges such as digital fraud by enterprises, including tampering with monitoring system parameters for purposes such as environmental penalty evasion.

In this context, building a modern, intelligent law enforcement system is essential for promoting ecological progress, Zhao added.

Empowering equipment

In recent years, China has consistently promoted the application of advanced technological equipment in law enforcement across multiple fields.

In December 2023, the central authorities released a document on the comprehensive promotion of the construction of a Beautiful China, which called on authorities to "accelerate digital empowerment, deepen the application of digital technologies such as AI, and build a digital governance system, in order to fulfill the goals of Beautiful China and ecological civilization." It further called for the "implementation of national environmental compliance actions, enforcement of targeted supervision of pollutant-discharging units, vigorous promotion of non-contact law enforcement, and the establishment of a smart law enforcement system."

This vision is being realized not from the top down alone, but through a mosaic of local innovations that are as diverse as the challenges they address.

Since this year, Shizuishan City in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region has constructed an intelligent command and control center for its air pollution battle. It integrates 700 sets of electric monitoring devices, 50 high-altitude observation points and 469 automatic pollution source monitors. This system dynamically visualizes the city's air quality index, issuing real-time reports. Mobile monitoring vehicles equipped with advanced mass spectrometers traverse industrial parks, painting dynamic pollution maps in green, yellow and red. Any anomaly triggers immediate investigation, forming a rapid response chain to locate the source of pollution. By this November, the city had recorded 262 days of good air quality, an increase of 26 days year on year.

Water security has also been revolutionized by the latest technologies. At the Changgang Water Reservoir in Xingguo County, Jiangxi Province, water protection was once hampered by aging fences and frequent contamination. Today, an intelligent network stands guard. High-definition cameras mounted on communication towers over 35 meters tall make 360-degree rotations, scanning the waters from on high, while 26 low-level monitors watch over key areas. An AI algorithm can accurately identify 12 types of risky behavior, including unauthorized fishing or swimming, with over 95 percent accuracy. One night this March, the system caught two individuals fishing illegally on the north shore. An alert was issued, and law enforcement arrived to intervene within 15 minutes. In the first nine months of operation, the system issued 294 precise alerts, all successfully addressed, reducing violations by 78 percent and cutting the emergency response time from five hours to under one.

"The 15th Five-Year Plan

XINHUA

Immigration officers in Qingdao, Shandong Province, receive professional training on October 14

(2026-30) period represents a critical phase for the systemic transformation of ecological and environmental law enforcement. We should step up to modernize governance systems and capabilities, strengthening the application of non-contact and smart digital technologies, innovating operational models, and expanding application scenarios," Zhao said.

Wide applications

While smart enforcement has reshaped environmental protection, its transformative impact is rapidly spreading across China's governance landscape. The same principles of using data-driven devices and giving intelligent responses are being applied to ensure efficiency and accountability in diverse sectors.

In Xuzhou, a major national transport hub in Jiangsu Province, traffic jams once created a governance nightmare. The city's transportation law enforcement team responded by forging an AI-powered "Legal Assistant" built on the DeepSeek model.

To prevent the AI from generating baffling outputs, the team "fed" it over 30,000 real cases collected from across the province. As a result, the AI assistant can retrieve relevant laws and similar cases in seconds.

"Last year, while handling a dispute involving special cargo transport, an AI assistant retrieved similar precedent cases in just three seconds, enabling front-line officers to resolve the issue swiftly and lawfully. This has significantly boosted our enforcement efficiency and helped ensure public satisfaction with investigation outcomes," an official from Xuzhou transportation team told newspaper *China Transportation News*.

"The application of an AI tool that people are already familiar with not only improves the efficiency of our work, but also brings benefits to people, since they are able to search for cases, settle a fine, or file a complaint online," he added.

At the 2025 Political and Legal Intelligent Technology Equipment and Achievements Exhibition, held in Beijing in July, tech companies showcased a range of products including big data, cloud computing, Internet of things, AI, cyber security communication equipment, language models and integrated big data systems for law enforcement. These demonstrations highlighted their practical applications in courts, procuratorates, public security agencies and other enforcement bodies.

Yao Shengli, President of the Baiyin Intermediate People's Court in Baiyin City of Gansu Province, detailed efforts to build a regional model for AI-powered justice. Baiyin's courts have prioritized practical needs. They established the province's first 24-hour self-service litigation center, enabling three-minute automated filing for 14 types of civil cases and facilitating cross-jurisdiction handling of 13 services.

In adjudication, the introduction of a large language model has enhanced legal query responses and precedent retrieval, improving judgment precision and document quality. For enforcement, a "big data + execution" model connects 17 departments including civil affairs, taxation and banking, slashing asset investigation time from three days to four hours and boosting the case completion rate by 15.2 percent year on year.

"We aim to exemplify how targeted technological integration is addressing regional challenges and reshaping judicial efficiency from within the system," Yao said at the event. "We have seen rapid technological developments in the past decade, what matters more is how we integrate their application within the political, legal and procuratorial systems, and make sure we have enough personnel who can master these technologies." **BR**

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XINHUA

A volunteer meets with students at a Constitution awareness event in a primary school in Dazhou, Sichuan Province, on December 3, 2024

COVER STORY

THE CPC AND THE RULE OF LAW

The Communist Party of China (CPC) is set out in the Constitution as China's governing party. Leadership by the CPC is described in the Chinese Constitution as the defining feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The external rhetoric, particularly in the West, however, is often that because the Party's leadership is legally ensured, the Party is above the law. President Xi Jinping stresses that not only are the Party's actions and those of its individual members held accountable to the law, they are also held to a higher standard by the Party's own set of rules. In an interview with *Beijing Review*, **Xia Lu**, a research fellow with the National Academy of Development and Strategy at Renmin University of China, shared his insights into Xi's theories and how the rule of law works in China. Edited excerpts of his views follow:

***Beijing Review*: Why is it important for societies to pursue the rule of law?**

Xia Lu: The rule of law is the opposite of arbitrary rule. Therefore, it is a value in itself, independent of the content of the law and other legal documents. It gives citizens and other economic actors, like corporations, a basic certainty in their interactions with others and with the government. Without this certainty, it is difficult to imagine that individuals and corporations will be able to develop their potential and that the economy will thrive and society will remain stable.

This presupposes that the government does not only rule through law but also according to law. There is no rule of law so long as the government can wield its power at will. By adopting the rule of law, the government is committed to not only pursuing its ends by using legal means but also adhering to the legal rules itself. Therefore, the rule of law is identical with the concept of "limited government."

Yet this certainty does not necessarily mean that the law must always remain the same. As social life is in constant change and modern science and technology constantly create new opportunities as well as new risks, it is inevitable that the law, which undertakes to regulate development, changes as well. But the rule of law guarantees that this change occurs in a legal way and, at least in principle, for the future and not retroactively.

The law is binding not only for private but also for public

actors, the government included. It is a requirement of the rule of law that state acts can be reviewed for compliance with the law. Only if this is guaranteed does the rule of law fulfill its promise to stabilize expectations, make state behavior predictable and create the degree of certainty on which social development depends.

What are President Xi's main ideas on China's rule of law?

Since becoming the CPC's top leader in 2012, President Xi has put forward new ideas and new strategies, giving shape to Xi Jinping Thought on the Rule of Law.

President Xi emphasizes the importance of China's socialist rule of law being led by the CPC, and sees that as the biggest difference between Chinese and Western rule of law.

The Party leads the people in enacting and enforcing the Constitution and other laws. And the Party itself is required to act within the confines of these laws. The government is expected to administer the country in accordance with the law. Additionally, efforts will be made to ensure sound legislation, strict law enforcement, impartial administration of justice and society-wide observance of the law, and to ensure that all work of the state is carried out under the rule of law. All this is aimed at protecting the people's rights and interests.

Xi also calls for rule-based governance of the Party so that it can better live up to its role as the country's governing party. The CPC has put in place a body of rules and regulations that hold Party members to a higher standard than that exists in the country's laws.

What are the similarities and differences between the rule of law in China and in Western countries like the U.S.?

The rule of law has a history of more than 200 years in the U.S., and more than 800 years in the UK. China, however, has practiced the rule of law for only a little over 100 years, since the end of the dynastic era. The Marriage Law of 1950 was the first law adopted after the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. The PRC's first Constitution was born in 1954. The Criminal Law, however, was not adopted until 1979. So, obviously, the practice in the West has become more mature, while China is still working to build a law-based country, government and society.

The U.S. practices the separation of powers, with checks and balances between the legislative, executive and judiciary branches. In China, the National People's Congress (NPC) is the highest state organ of power. In addition to being vested by the Constitution with wide-ranging powers including enacting laws and electing leaders, it also stands above the administrative and other branches of the government, as well as the judiciary. The Party exercises leadership over state organs through the NPC and people's congresses at local levels, all of which consist of elected deputies. Specifically, through legal procedures at people's congresses, candidates nominated by the Party become leaders of state institutions including courts and procuratorates, which mainly deal with public prosecution and the supervision of criminal investigation.

China's courts are required by the Constitution to work independently without being influenced by administrative power. Party and government officials are prohibited from interfering in judicial proceedings. Authorities leading or overseeing judicial work may inquire about the handling of cases and ensure judicial bodies are properly fulfilling their duties but must not influence any decisions on specific issues such as evidence admission and the issuance of judgments.

China's legal system is still developing and requires the guidance of the Party, which is the guiding force behind all aspects of China's development.

What is China's vision for the rule of law in the coming decades?

China's rule of law is in the process of becoming more and more mature. China plans to put the rule of law largely in place for the country, the government and society by 2035. Here are some of the main goals:

Part of strengthening the rule of law is improving the laws themselves. China will better implement the Constitution by better conducting compliance oversight. It will step up legislation in emerging fields such as AI and big data, in which existing laws have been found to be inadequate.

China will steadily advance law-based government by making the government more streamlined, service-oriented and accountable.

It will ensure strict and impartial administration of justice by improving systems to accelerate the development of a fair, efficient and authoritative socialist judicial system. The goal is to see that the people feel justice has been served in each and every judicial case. This is important because judicial corruption still exits. President Xi has highlighted cases where some have got away with their crimes through bribery, with officials speaking on their behalf and green-lighting their conduct.

China will carry forward the best of its traditional legal culture as part of its efforts to build a law-based society. Many excellent ideas are worth passing on, such as advocating harmony to reduce the need for lawsuits. By revisiting the wisdom of China's traditional legal culture, all Chinese people will be encouraged to truly revere, readily observe, and firmly defend the rule of law. **BR**

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Understanding Contemporary China Through Primary Sources

By Djoomart Otorbaev

The publication of the fifth volume of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* in July represents a significant milestone in the international dissemination of contemporary Chinese political thought. For foreign audiences seeking to understand the internal logic, strategic priorities and normative worldview of the world's second largest economy, the volume provides an indispensable primary source.

At a time when Western commentary on China is frequently shaped by misperception, selective narratives or geopolitical anxieties, returning to the original texts is not merely useful—it is essential. This book offers a direct window into the governing philosophy that has guided China through a period of profound transformation, global uncertainty and institutional reform.

The Intelligent Healthcare exhibition area of the 138th edition of the Canton Fair, officially known as the China Import and Export Fair, in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, on October 31

Why important

Volume V brings together 91 speeches and written statements delivered by President Xi Jinping between May 2022 and December 2024, accompanied by 41 photographs documenting key events from the same period. Like previous installments, this volume is not a conventional monograph. Instead, it is conceived as a reference text that captures the evolution of policy thinking across different domains. The recurring themes, deliberate emphases and policy formulations reflect what the Chinese leadership considers most vital in navigating both domestic challenges and the rapidly shifting international environment.

Structurally, the book is organized into 18 thematic sections, each addressing a central aspect of China's governance in the new era. Among the core themes is Chinese modernization, presented as both the historical mission of national rejuvenation and an ongoing process of building a modern socialist country. The narrative underscores that China's development path is unique in its scale, sequencing and political foundations—yet deeply connected to global transformations.

Another central theme is high-quality economic development, with a strong focus on cultivating new quality productive forces, deepening reform and expanding high-standard opening up to the world. These ideas are not abstract formulations; they constitute the intellectual framework guiding China's efforts to upgrade its industrial structure, strengthen technological innovation and adapt to a more complex global economy. (First introduced in 2023, new quality productive forces represent China's strategic shift toward a more innovative, technology-driven and sustainable economic model to achieve higher productivity, competitiveness and long-term growth—*Ed.*)

Equally prominent are discussions of the rule of law, whole-process people's democracy, cultural revitalization, ecological civilization, and the Communist Party of China's leadership and self-reform. These sections highlight the integration of governance, culture and institutional design within the broader project of China's modernization. The volume also devotes considerable attention to China's global role and the vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity.

From a scholarly perspective, this publication's significance is multifaceted. First, it offers more profound insight into the intellectual architecture of Xi Jinping Thought on

Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. Second, it functions as an authoritative source for understanding China's policy decisions, long-term development goals and strategic responses to global shifts. Third, it provides clarity on how China interprets its contributions to international development, governance reform and global stability.

Evolving concepts

The evolution of the concept of "opening up" across the five volumes is particularly revealing. In earlier speeches, opening up was framed as a continuation of China's strategy of opening its market to foreign investment that began in 1978 and a civilizational principle inherited from the Silk Road tradition. By Volume III, openness had become a central pillar of China's engagement with global governance, underpinned by commitments to market access, intellectual property protection and trade facilitation.

Volume IV expanded opening up even further, linking it to digital transformation, public health and ecological transition. In Volume V, the notion acquires a global moral dimension: Opening up is framed as China's response to rising protectionism and geopolitical fragmentation. It is associated with high-standard economic cooperation, alignment with UN Sustainable Development Goals and a shared responsibility to safeguard global prosperity. What began as an economic strategy has thus matured into a principle of global governance and an element of China's international identity.

The same dynamic evolution is visible in discussions of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Across earlier volumes, the BRI, first proposed by Xi in 2013, transitioned from an infrastructure-focused connectivity initiative to a broad platform for international cooperation. In Volume V, it is portrayed as an established global public good, contributing to sustainable development, digital connectivity, green collaboration and alternative pathways to modernization. This shift reflects China's intention to position the BRI within the broader architecture of a multipolar world, offering a complement—not a competitor—to existing development models.

China has achieved unprecedented development successes over the past more than four decades, yet Western discourse often frames its trajectory through narratives of instability or imminent crisis. How do Chinese leaders themselves interpret China's development path? Xi's speeches offer answers rooted in historical continuity, strategic foresight and a pragmatic assessment of domestic needs. They articulate a governance approach that draws legitimacy from economic achievement, institutional confidence and an enduring commitment to openness and cooperation.

Understanding this internal logic is crucial, especially for audiences in Europe and the wider West. China's rise does not merely reflect economic growth; it signals the emergence of alternative perspectives on development, governance and global order. Engaging with these perspectives is not an act of endorsement but of intellectual responsibility. In an era of global interdependence, misunderstanding China imposes costs not only on bilateral relations but on global problem-solving.

The historical context reinforces this point. In less than half a century, China has moved from being one of the world's poorest countries to a technological and economic powerhouse. This transformation challenges many long-held assumptions in Western development theory. Reading primary texts such as the five volumes of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* provides an opportunity to reassess those assumptions and to recognize that China's approach is the result of deliberate, sustained institutional innovation.

Ultimately, Volume V of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* should be understood as more than a political document. It is an intellectual resource that helps global readers grasp the strategic thinking of a significant country whose decisions increasingly shape the world economy, global governance and the international system. For policymakers, business leaders, journalists and scholars, engaging with this text is not optional—it is imperative. **BR**

XINHUA

Members of the 11th Chinese peacekeeping police force to South Sudan at their departure ceremony at the Peacekeeping Police Training Center of China People's Police University on August 5

The author is former prime minister of Kyrgyzstan, a distinguished professor of the Belt and Road School at Beijing Normal University and author of the book *Central Asia's Economic Rebirth in the Shadow of the New Great Game*

Copyedited by G.P. Wilson

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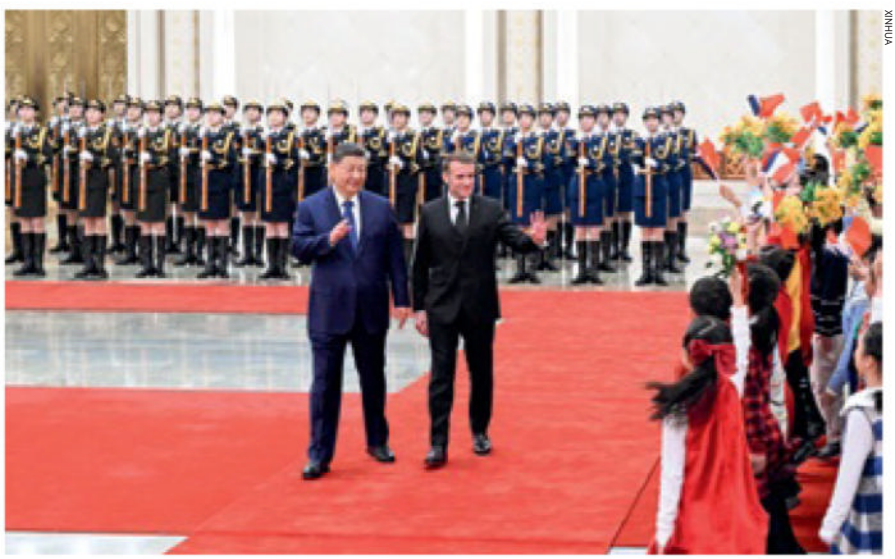
Pragmatism and Strategy

By Zhao Yongsheng

After a two-year hiatus, French President Emmanuel Macron returned to China for a state visit from December 3 to 5, with stops in both Beijing and Chengdu. At a time when profound, generation-defining shifts in the global landscape are unfolding, the world economy is straining to regain momentum and geopolitical realignments are gathering speed, this high-level engagement between China and France, both permanent members of the UN Security Council and major powers that prize strategic autonomy, carries weight well beyond the bilateral relationship.

Macron's trip is not just about reaffirming and deepening a comprehensive strategic partnership; it is a deliberate attempt to use the relative stability of China-France ties to counterbalance mounting global uncertainty. By honoring his promise to return to China, Macron is signaling a shared expectation in both Beijing and Paris for closer coordination, an expectation rooted not in naïveté, but in sober strategic calculation and a clear-eyed pursuit of mutual benefit.



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Chinese President Xi Jinping holds a welcome ceremony for French President Emmanuel Macron at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on December 4

Tapping complementarities

Head-of-state diplomacy has long been a driving force behind China-France economic and trade cooperation. High-level visits provide an efficient channel for pragmatic dialogue, much like the well-established China-Germany model, where engagement is guided not by ideology but by industrial complementarity and market logic. Over the years, China and France have built a deeply interdependent economic relationship, one that adheres to market principles, balances each side's interests and makes each an integral part of the other's economic fabric.

Macron's last visit in April 2023 offered a vivid illustration of this dynamic. The agreement for China to purchase 160 Airbus aircraft, with a contract value of roughly $20 billion, demonstrated how market demand naturally aligns with complementary industrial strengths. At the same time, French orders for Chinese-built container vessels worth about $3.1 billion highlighted France's confidence in China's high-end manufacturing capabilities. Rather than a zero-sum deal where gains are lopsided, it is a symbiotic partnership that enables both countries to capitalize on their market size, industrial strengths and long-term strategic priorities.

Macron led a large delegation of business leaders on this visit, underscoring that economic and trade cooperation remains at the core of his agenda. Beyond aviation, France, as Europe's leading agricultural producer, seeks to further expand its access to the Chinese market for high-quality agricultural and food products, building on the "from French farms to Chinese tables" mechanism that links the entire supply chain. China, for its part, aims to deepen cooperation with French enterprises in areas where it holds strong competitive advantages, including new energy, green technologies and the digital economy.

At a time when the EU has tightened certain regulatory measures toward China, China is expected to maintain its long-standing openness and work with France to safeguard a fair, predictable environment for Chinese investment and products in the French market. Through technological cooperation and institution-based opening up, the two sides can help ease frictions over market access and regulatory reciprocity, potentially setting a constructive benchmark for broader China-EU economic and trade engagement.

Of course, a single visit cannot resolve every disagreement over market openness, industrial rules or technology governance. Its significance lies in reopening space for sustained, high-level consultation between China and France, and, by extension, between China and Europe, on precisely these foundational issues, and in laying the groundwork for both sides to seek a new, more stable balance of interests.

Supporting a multipolar world

Among major Western powers, France's geopolitical outlook has always been distinctive. Rooted in "strategic autonomy," which derives from the de Gaullist idea of independence, France has long advocated an independent foreign policy, opposed all forms of unilateral hegemony and championed multilateralism and the post-World War II international order, an approach that resonates with China's own commitment to an independent foreign policy of peace.

Today, the shift toward a more multipolar world is irreversible. The U.S., China and Europe are all key pillars of global stability, and constructive interaction among them is widely viewed as essential. Within this configuration, France has pushed for the EU to assume a more independent role on the world stage, a stance that dovetails with China's support for European integration and its welcoming of the EU as a major pole in an increasingly multipolar system.

Recent signals also point to growing strategic trust. Media report that Macron is considering inviting China to attend the G7 summit that France will host in 2026. On the Taiwan question, France has consistently upheld the one-China principle, and in a recent phone call with his Chinese counterpart, the French foreign minister explicitly expressed understanding of China's legitimate position. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, France thus shares with China a core interest in upholding the post-war international order on this fundamental issue.

On the Ukraine crisis, China has consistently advocated dialogue and negotiation and opposed further escalation of the conflict. During Macron's visit, China and France exchanged views on preventing escalation and advancing a political settlement. Such high-level communication can help build consensus in favor of peace and inject much-needed positive momentum into regional stability.

Deepening civilizational dialogue

People-to-people exchange has long been a traditional strength and a solid foundation of China-France relations. Macron's decision to add Chengdu to his itinerary, alongside Beijing, sends a signal that goes beyond protocol and logistics.

Chengdu is home to one of the world's best-known giant panda research and breeding centers. Not long ago, Huan Huan and Yuan Zi, a pair of giant pandas who had lived in France for 13 years and become beloved symbols of the relationship, returned to China. France now hopes to welcome a new, younger pair. This "panda diplomacy" remains one of the most recognizable and endearing emblems of the deep friendship between the two countries.

Chengdu is also a cradle of Chinese civilization, preserving the rich heritage of the ancient Shu culture, flourishing more than 3,000 years ago in what is now the Chengdu region, with the Sanxingdui site as its most remarkable example. A visit there reflects France's respect for China's long history and cultural diversity, and offers an opportunity to gain a more comprehensive, multidimensional understanding of the country, one that goes beyond the skylines of its coastal megacities.

At the same time, Chengdu is the economic hub of west China, with notable strengths in new energy, aerospace and digital industries. Macron's stop there is expected to encourage French companies to deepen their presence in the region's dynamic markets and to explore cooperation in areas such as supply chain resilience, critical raw materials and emerging future-oriented industries.

China-France solution for global governance

Macron's visit is an important milestone in the evolution of the China-France comprehensive strategic partnership. In the economic realm, the two sides are expected to continue leveraging their complementary strengths and pursuing pragmatic cooperation to address development challenges. At the strategic level, they can work together to safeguard multilateralism and inject greater stability into an increasingly multipolar international order. In the people-to-people sphere, deeper civilizational dialogue will help ensure that the tree of friendship between the two countries remains evergreen.

Structural differences will, of course, persist in China-France and China-EU relations. Yet as long as both sides uphold mutual respect and engage in dialogue on an equal footing, no problem is insurmountable.

Since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1964, China and France have carved out a distinctive path of major-power engagement grounded in strategic autonomy. Looking ahead, as the world grapples with shared challenges such as climate change and public health crises, the two countries, both firm defenders of multilateralism, enjoy broad space for cooperation. By strengthening strategic communication and expanding practical collaboration, China and France can not only deepen their bilateral partnership, but also help bring greater stability to an uncertain world, jointly contributing a "China-France solution" to the future of global governance. **BR**

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Youth Exchange Bolsters China-Australia Ties

By Wang Peng

Crossing the vast Pacific, the youth of China and Australia are writing a new chapter in the future of bilateral relations through face-to-face exchanges.

In late November, nearly 40 young representatives from China and Australia gathered at the 15th Australia-China Youth Dialogue (ACYD) in Guangzhou, capital of the southern Chinese province of Guangdong, to engage in discussions on the theme Building Resilience in Uncertainty. Chinese Ambassador to Australia Xiao Qian and Australian Ambassador to China Scott Dewar separately delivered video speeches, encouraging the youth of both countries to play an active role in people-to-people diplomacy and contribute to the development of China-Australia friendship and practical cooperation.

The event was held at a crucial time when China-Australia relations are recovering after experiencing setbacks. As both ambassadors mentioned, China's development is an opportunity for the world. China is willing to work with all countries to pursue high-quality development and create a future of shared opportunities, shared growth and shared prosperity.

Opportunities and challenges

Looking back at the recent years of China-Australia relations, it has been a turbulent journey. Before the Australian Labor Party came to power in 2022, the bilateral relationship had hit a low point.

After the Labor government assumed power, through joint efforts, China-Australia relations began to stabilize and show a positive trend toward improvement and development. The two countries held high-level exchanges, resumed diplomatic dialogue and fully restored economic and trade exchange, with significant growth in trade and investment. Both sides are also actively advancing cultural exchange and educational cooperation. These achievements have been hard-won and should be cherished by both parties.

On May 3, the Labor Party won the 2025 Australian federal election, securing party leader Anthony Albanese a second term as prime minister and providing policy continuity for the continued improvement of bilateral relations. In July, Albanese visited China and held talks with President Xi Jinping and other Chinese leaders, injecting new momentum into the comprehensive elevation of bilateral relations.

While the relationship between China and Australia is improving, its enhancement is still constrained by numerous internal and external factors.

First, the "America Uncertainty" era brought by Donald Trump's second term as U.S. president is a significant external variable influencing China-Australia relations.

Australia has long faced the dilemma of how to balance its security alliance with the U.S. and trade dependence on China. Now, both of these key supports are confronting challenges.

The U.S.-launched trade war against China threatens Australia's main export markets, which could lead to major ripple effects felt by all Australians. China is not only Australia's largest export destination for minerals, energy, agricultural products and seafood, but trade with China also supports about 600,000 local jobs in Australia and has increased the average disposable income of Australian families by nearly 5 percent.

On the other hand, the trilateral security partnership between the U.S., the UK and Australia, along with the nuclear submarine cooperation project, indicates that Australia is deepening its military integration with the U.S., which to some extent limits its own strategic autonomy.

Nevertheless, Trump's "bullying diplomacy" approach, characterized by unilateral economic sanctions and coercive threats to allies, not only undermines multilateralism but also put the future of U.S. global leadership into question. An article recently published by the Australian Institute of International Affairs pointed out, "Trump's foreign policy forced U.S. allies, including Australia, to reassess their diplomatic strategies."

The role of youth exchange

Faced with a complex international situation, youth exchange between China and Australia is becoming an important way to enhance mutual understanding between the two countries and strengthen the public foundation for friendly relations.

Since its establishment in 2010, the ACYD has annually invited about 30 outstanding representatives from both countries to engage in exchange dialogues, allowing the youth to voice their opinions in building long-term stable, mutually beneficial relations between China and Australia.

These exchange activities provide opportunities for face-to-face interaction between

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Pipers from the Melbourne Highland Pipe Band march in a parade at the Shanghai Tourism Festival in Shanghai on September 13

participants, helping them move beyond stereotypes and understand the true nature of the other side.

In addition to the ACYD, multiple platforms for exchange have been established between the two countries to provide multichannel support for youth interactions.

In the 2024-25 funding list released by Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Penny Wong, several projects promoting youth exchange between China and Australia are included. For example, the China Studies Scholarship program at the Australian National University plans to fund 50 Australian university graduates to study in China for a year from 2025 to 2028. The Stephen FitzGerald Scholars program provides outstanding Chinese students from Australian universities with the opportunity to gain in-depth knowledge of Australian history, systems and society.

At In My Eyes, China, a China-Australia youth face-to-face exchange event organized by the Chinese Embassy in Australia on June 28, Ambassador Xiao shared his personal experiences, vividly explaining the Communist Party of China's commitment to seeking happiness for the Chinese people, realizing the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and pursuing shared prosperity for humanity. Over 60 participants, including teachers and students from Melbourne's Sea Star High School and young diplomats from the embassy, took part in the event. Through activities such as Chinese painting experiences and park tours, they deepened their understanding of Chinese culture.

Later on July 30, the China Oceania Youth Exchange Festival, hosted by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, was held in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. The theme of the event was Cultural Inheritance and Innovation in Minority Regions, and youth representatives from Australia, New Zealand and China exchanged ideas and formed friendships.

Chinese students in Melbourne and Australian students on campuses in Sydney are meeting through exchange programs. Performances on the Inner Mongolian grasslands and Australian studies courses in Beijing are quietly weaving the bonds of cultural exchange between the two countries. These diverse exchange platforms help the youth of both nations understand each other from multiple perspectives and lay a solid foundation for the long-term development of China-Australia relations.

Moving toward the future together

Youth exchange between China and Australia is increasing. As communication channels continue to expand and forms of exchange become increasingly diverse, mutual understanding between the youth of both countries will continue to deepen.

In his speech at the opening ceremony of the 15th ACYD, Ambassador Xiao encouraged youth from both countries to play an active role in promoting people-to-people friendship and advancing practical cooperation. He welcomed more young Australians to visit, study and participate in exchanges in China, so that the tree of China-Australia friendship may grow stronger and bear more fruit.

As one Australian youth participant remarked after the exchange event, "What we face are not abstract national concepts, but individuals with the same dreams and pursuits." This kind of face-to-face exchange is the most effective way to eliminate barriers and build mutual trust.

As more and more youth from both countries work hand in hand, the future of China-Australia relations will undoubtedly become more resilient, better able to meet any challenges that arise. There is every reason to believe that, through the collective efforts of the youth of both countries, China-Australia relations will usher in a brighter tomorrow. **BR**

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A Bridge of Stories and Systems

As China welcomes more global creators and influencers, new perspectives are emerging beyond familiar narratives. To better understand this shift, *Beijing Review* reporter Li Wenhan spoke with **Molombo Thillot**, Cultural Director and media correspondent for the American Communist Party, during his first visit to China. Edited excerpts of their conversation follow:

***Beijing Review*: You are an artist and a media correspondent for the American Communist Party. How do you balance creative work with political activism?**

Molombo Thillot: From the outside, it might look contradictory—being an artist while also working in a political movement. But for Black people in the U.S., and for the Black radical tradition, it's normal. Historically, our artists, thinkers and organizers were often the same people. Look at the Panthers: Some of the most recognized figures in that movement were also creators. They used art, music and culture to express political ideas. (The Black Panther Party was a revolutionary socialist organization founded in 1966 in the United States to combat racial oppression, advocate for civil rights and empower African American communities—*Ed*.)

For me, communism isn't only theory or a stack of books. A lot of times, it's community. It's that feeling of building something together. And art is one of the easiest ways to connect with people on that emotional level. If I can reach someone through a song or a piece of art rather than handing them a dense book, that's still political work—it's just meeting people where they are.

My audience tends to be people who want to learn, but who don't want politics presented as something angry or intimidating. I'm chill, positive, and I try to make these ideas feel human and accessible. Politics doesn't always have to be heavy—it can be inviting.

In America, the words "communism" and "socialism" carry a lot of baggage. So I often talk about community building, mutual care and loving your neighbor. Because at the end of the day, what matters isn't the label—it's the values. Most people, regardless of politics, understand wanting food on the table, going to the hospital without fear or sending their kids to school without debt. Those are universal needs.

Sometimes I'll ask people, "What do you want in life?" They'll say, "Money." But when you dig deeper, what they really want is security—like buying their mom a home or retiring their parents. That's not greed. That's love. So I ask: why do we need to hoard wealth just to feel safe? Why can't society guarantee that kind of dignity?

If your community is thriving, you feel better too. No one likes walking past trash or seeing someone homeless on their street. Everyone would prefer living in a neighborhood where people have what they need. Even if you don't "like communism," you definitely like that idea.

I grew up in middle America—Texas, the deep center of the country. People there want a better society, but many feel they don't have real choices. It's a low-trust environment. What we need is to rebuild trust and remember that we're social beings. None of us can do life alone.

So whether through art or activism, I'm always trying to reconnect people to that simple truth: We need each other, and we're stronger together.

As a first-time visitor to China, what has surprised you the most or been most different from your expectations—whether it's the urban landscape, cultural atmosphere or interactions with people?

Honestly, almost everything surprised me. I'm a well-read American, and I always suspected that a lot of what our government and media say about China isn't accurate. But being here confirmed it—and even went beyond what I imagined. China is beautiful. The cities, the architecture, the level of efficiency—it's all on a different scale. And one of the first things I noticed walking around Beijing and Shanghai is how clean everything is. In Los Angeles, I'm always watching my feet so I don't step on something. Here, I don't even think about it.

I also felt a strong sense of community. In Shanghai, I visited a neighborhood community center, and I was blown away.

And that's a huge difference. In China, the government has clear goals—five-year plans, long-term development, poverty eradication, technological progress, promoting culture. It's utopian in vision but very practical in execution. You can feel there's a plan for the future

It had everything: local history, services, study spaces, information for new residents. I've lived in Los Angeles for six years and still don't fully understand my own neighborhood. The idea of a place where you can learn your whole community in one stop? We don't have anything like that in the U.S.

Another thing: I didn't see the kind of extreme poverty or homelessness that's so common in major American cities. That alone tells you a better society is possible. China clearly puts serious effort into housing—so many apartment buildings, but instead of feeling small, you actually feel like part of a community.

The infrastructure impressed me too. Roads, metros, stoplights, everything is efficient and well-maintained. The high-speed rail? Amazing. We don't have anything even close to it in the U.S. Even construction sites feel organized—always active, never chaotic. In America, a simple pothole can take one or two years to fix because of endless bureaucratic delays and private contractors negotiating for profit. Here, you get the sense that things are done quickly because there's a unified purpose.

And that's a huge difference. In China, the government has clear goals—five-year plans, long-term development, poverty eradication, technological progress, promoting culture. It's utopian in vision but very practical in execution. You can feel there's a plan for the future.

In America, there's no grand project like that. Politics is just Democrats and Republicans undoing each other every four years. It's a system built for gridlock—two groups of capitalists arguing over where to put money, with everyday people forgotten in the middle. There's no bigger vision for human wellbeing.

Comparing the two makes me realize how deeply moral Chinese society feels, and how directionless my own country often is. Being here gave me a lot of hope. It shows that efficiency, planning and community care aren't theoretical—they're real, and they work.

How do you assess the current state of China-U.S. relations, and what do you think drives the tensions? What can both sides do to stabilize the relationship?

From what I see, as a cultural director and media correspondent for the American Communist Party, I say my observation of China-America relations is that it's not as bad as it used to be. I would say it's actually quite positive. A big part of that is China becoming much more confident and intentional in how it presents itself to the world.

The real problem isn't the people—it's the politicians. Many American leaders want conflict with China because they have no long-term vision for the country. Their only "plan" is keeping America on top, and China's rise challenges that. So they stir things up—Taiwan, tariffs, hype about "threats"—all to create friction. But ordinary Americans don't want conflict, and this year especially, more people are seeing the real China for the first time.

Influencers like IShowSpeed, Hasan Piker, Vijay Prashad and many others have visited China and seen a society that actually treats people like human beings. Their audiences back home see that too. Little by little, the mystery is gone, and the propaganda loses its power.

China, on the other hand, has been very steady and very strategic. It understands soft power now—culture, community, hospitality. That approach humanizes China for everyday Americans in a way politics never could.

I also think Black Americans in particular feel a natural connection with China. That's been true for generations. There's a sense of mutual respect that doesn't exist in many other relationships we have.

The deeper issue is that American leaders can't accept equality. China isn't trying to be "number one" over everyone—it just wants to be treated as an equal. But U.S. politicians are used to being the only superpower. They like trading with China, but they don't like the idea of sharing global influence.

Going forward, I think the people—not the politicians—will shape the future of U.S.-China relations. China is building friendships across Africa and the Global South, strengthening its connections. Chinese people will be fine. It's Americans who need to adjust their mindset and learn that a world with equals isn't a threat. **BR**

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How Washington's Trade War Sowed Decline

By Einar Tangen

For more than a century, agriculture has been a pillar of the U.S. economy, feeding domestic consumers and supplying global markets. It is a story of remarkable efficiency, in which less than 2 percent of the population feeds the nation and generates significant export income.

Soybeans have become one of the stars of U.S. farm exports, with China emerging as the dominant buyer over the last decade. But this success is sadly coming to an end, disrupted by Washington's trade war with China—a conflict that has exposed structural weaknesses in U.S. agriculture, empowered competitors and accelerated America's self-inflicted decline in competitiveness. This decline mirrors parallel issues in American manufacturing and finance, rooted in a lack of rational, sustainable goals and policies.

In 2018, under the first Donald Trump administration, the U.S. began introducing tariffs targeting China under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, which was established as a remedy for trade practices Washington deemed to be unfair. While the U.S. billed the tariffs as a strategy to force China to change its trade practices—a fig-leaf for trying to slow China's economic rise—in reality, the administration's tactics lacked a strategic endgame. The resulting trade war was a shock to U.S. soybean farmers and a windfall for soybean production in Brazil. It also brought about a long-term weakening of America's agricultural competitiveness. Relief programs failed to reach those most in need, while bankruptcies and suicides rose in rural communities. This story is not just about soybeans; it is about how short-sighted policy can accelerate structural decline.

The scale of soybean farming in America is staggering. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in 2024, the country's cropland devoted to crops totaled 328 million acres (133 million hectares), with soybeans planted on 86.1-87.1 million acres (34.8-35.2 million hectares)—roughly 26 percent of the total. Corn accounted for 91.5 million acres (37 million hectares), and wheat for 47.2 million acres (19.1 million hectares), but soybeans remained the leading oil-seed crop and a cornerstone of U.S. agricultural exports. Interestingly, this is an aspect rarely fully discussed by the U.S. media.

Over the 10 years prior to 2018, China bought the bulk of U.S. soybeans and American farmers became heavily dependent on China's hunger for soy products and animal feed. When the tariffs disrupted trade flows, the consequences were immediate and severe: rotting bins full of unsold soybeans, collapsing cash flows and mounting debts.

What is most striking is that this weaponization of tariffs occurred under Trump's first presidency and is being repeated under his second. Given it accomplished nothing the first time and China has consistently become stronger and less dependent on America, the repetition appears to be a failure of collective memory within the Trump administration.

Structural advantages

The tariffs have accelerated Brazil's rise as the world's leading soybean exporter. Unlike the U.S., Brazil produces soybeans nearly year-round thanks to its climate, and it does so without the extensive government subsidies that underpin U.S. agriculture.

Brazil's soybean acreage has expanded rapidly, and its logistical infrastructure—ports, rail and inland freight—has improved under pressure to meet Chinese demand. The farmdoc daily, one of the farmdoc project websites operated by the University of Illinois, provides research, analysis, tools and data to help Corn Belt farmers in the U.S. make better decisions. According to farmdoc daily, in 2023, Brazil exported a record 3.74 billion bushels of soybeans, a 29-percent increase from the previous year, while U.S. exports fell 14 percent. China has become increasingly reliant on Brazil, cementing its supply chain and bypassing American farmers.

Additionally, Chinese infrastructure investments are helping Brazil become a more efficient, long-term competitor to the U.S. in China's agricultural import market.

While subsidies may sustain U.S. soybean farmers in the short term, they cannot overcome structural disadvantages in climate, logistics and cost. Trump's tariffs gave Brazil the opening it needed to expand output and reduce costs through infrastructure investments, accelerating its emergence as the dominant global supplier and China's preferred partner—a position it is likely to maintain.

The toll of tariffs

U.S. farm bankruptcies reportedly rose during the tariff years, reflecting many producers' inability to withstand prolonged low prices and disrupted markets. In 2015, farm bankruptcies were relatively stable, reflecting moderate commodity prices and manageable

debt. According to Farm Policy News, another farmdoc project website, between April 2024 and March 2025, 259 farm bankruptcies were filed, underscoring the persistence of financial stress in the sector.

While not all these bankruptcies are due solely to tariffs—high interest rates, fuel costs and weather also played roles—the trade war was a critical accelerant. Soybean farmers, heavily exposed to China, bore the brunt.

Beyond bankruptcies, the human cost has been tragic, with rising reports of farmer suicides. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has identified farmers as an occupational group at elevated risk for suicide. As the trade war continued, reports of unsustainable debt and collapsing markets devastating farmers flooded in. While exact statistics on soybean farmer suicides are not available, anecdotal evidence and occupational data point to the effects of a combination of financial ruin, uncertainty and cultural stigma in creating a mental health crisis in rural America.

In response to the tariffs, Washington rolled out aid packages under the Market Facilitation Program (MFP), totaling billions of dollars. Yet these relief funds have historically flowed disproportionately to large agribusinesses rather than small, distressed family farms.

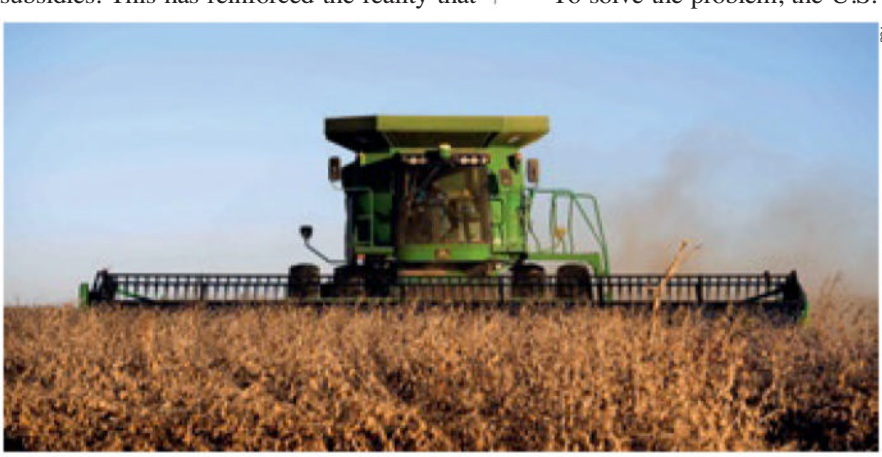
Many individual farmers complained that aid arrived too late or was insufficient to cover losses, while corporate operations with larger land areas and better administrative capacity captured the lion's share of government subsidies. This has reinforced the reality that government programs often sustain "big agriculture" while leaving smaller producers vulnerable.

Reuters reported on December 2 that shipments of U.S. crops to China are accelerating after a tense tariff war had stalled trade for months, with at least six bulk cargo vessels scheduled to be loaded with soybeans at terminals on the U.S. Gulf Coast through mid-December.

Just days before China made the deal to secure U.S. soybeans, the General Administration of Customs of China placed a ban on imports of soybeans from five Brazilian suppliers after discovering a shipment of soybeans contaminated with wheat that had been treated with a pesticide banned in China. At time of writing, it is too early to gauge the full impact of the ban on the balance of China's soybean imports from the U.S. and Brazil, but it is safe to assume China will make the necessary decisions to ensure safe and stable supply over the coming months.

However, U.S. soybeans remain more expensive than those from Brazil. Commercial buyers are still going to prefer Brazil because margins on U.S. beans are not as financially viable. So this doesn't reverse the long-term trend.

To solve the problem, the U.S. government should stop using farmers as pawns in trade wars and rebuild trust with trading partners through stable, rules-based agreements. Also, it needs to diversify markets beyond China to reduce vulnerability. Last but not least, it should address structural issues at home: rural infrastructure, mental health support and fair access to aid for small farms. Farmers want markets, not bailouts. If Washington doesn't pivot, rural America faces an existential crisis.



VCG

Austin Rohlfing, an American farmer, harvests soybeans on his family's field near Boonville, Missouri, on November 5

Greater vision needed

The effects of Washington's tariffs extended beyond soybean farmers to the wider agricultural industry and the American economy. At the heart of the problem is the absence of a clear, achievable vision. Tariffs were imposed as a blunt instrument, with the stated goal of creating a "golden age" for America. Yet no coherent short-term strategy existed to sustain farmers through the disruption, nor was there a long-term strategy to recapture markets through trade agreements or reduce logistics costs afterward.

Instead, the uncertainty of negotiations has left farmers in limbo, while China diversifies its supply chains and Brazil expands its dominance. Relief programs failed small and medium-sized farmers while benefiting big agribusinesses, and the structural disadvantages of U.S. agriculture—climate, logistics and reliance on subsidies—remain unaddressed.

In effect, Washington's tariffs accelerated the competitive collapse of American agriculture without delivering compensatory benefits or a future plan. They are tactics without strategy, a disruption without a plan for recovery.

The competitive collapse of American agriculture is not inevitable, but reversing it requires vision, investment and policies that support small producers as well as large agribusinesses. Without such measures, the trajectory set in motion by Washington's tariffs will continue, eroding America's agricultural base and weakening its economic resilience. **BR**

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The Melting Pot Is Melting

By Liang Xiao

U.S. immigration policy appears to be undergoing a major shift. On November 27, President Donald Trump announced on social media that he would indefinitely suspend immigration from "third world countries." Meanwhile, the U.S. Government has also begun reviewing asylum, refugee and green card cases approved in recent years. If reviews uncover so-called "risks," "incomplete information" or anything deemed "contrary to U.S. interests," those affected could have their status revoked or even face deportation proceedings.

Immigration has been a central focus for Trump across both of his terms. During his first term, he began construction of a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border and in 2017 issued the "Muslim ban" restricting citizens from certain Islamic countries from entering the U.S. In his second term, Trump signed multiple executive orders related to immigration policy on the first day of his presidency, including ending birthright citizenship and suspending the U.S. refugee resettlement program. Additionally, he has tightened requirements for H-1B work visa applications and granted U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement expanded authority to arrest "undocumented immigrants."

Tightening immigration policy fulfills Trump's campaign promises—a significant portion of his supporters are anxious about demographic changes in America and hope to reshape the population structure to maintain the dominance of white Americans. The immediate trigger for his announcement to suspend immigration from "third world countries" was the shooting of two National Guard members near the White House on the November 26, which left one dead and one critically injured. The suspect is a 29-year-old Afghan national who entered the U.S. in 2021 through the refugee resettlement program implemented by the Joe Biden administration.

Americans have not forgotten the 9/11 terrorist attacks launched by the Afghanistan-based Al Qaeda organization in 2001. By linking this shooting near the White House by an Afghan refugee to the previous administration's immigration policies, the current administration can not only make its immigration crackdowns appear more justified and shore up support among its base, but also turn the tables on the Democrats.

The contours of the new immigration policy are becoming clearer. The Trump administration may progressively expand the scope of suspensions through executive orders, adding to the list of nationalities for which visa, asylum and family reunification applications will be frozen, while strengthening review mechanisms for existing immigrants and pushing for federal benefits reform. Through enforcement pressure and economic hardship, the aim is to reverse immigration flows—driving away people who would otherwise come to the U.S.

What are the potential consequences? Some argue that restrictive immigration policies could ease fiscal and welfare spending pressures in the U.S., boost employment rates among less-educated Americans and drive up wages for low-income workers. Yet it's important to recognize that many U.S. industries—including agriculture, caregiving and food service—are heavily reliant on immigrant labor. These sectors may face labor shortages and rising labor costs in the future. Meanwhile, restrictions on highly educated immigrants are also mounting, which could force tech and innovation-driven companies that depend on overseas talent to adjust their hiring strategies or even relocate portions of their operations to countries with more lenient immigration policies.

More fundamentally, Washington's readiness to impose sweeping restrictions on specific countries or groups in the name of "national security" is itself a form of racially discriminatory bias. At a time when racial tensions in the U.S. are already intensifying, government-sanctioned differential treatment of different nationalities and ethnic groups will affect far more than just new immigrants—American minority communities will inevitably feel the impact as well. When minority and immigrant communities are subjected to prolonged scrutiny or even hostility, their social relationships and sense of identity come under sustained pressure, creating a vicious cycle.

The U.S. has long prided itself on being a "melting pot" and cultural "mosaic." The national narrative at the heart of American identity is that America is composed of immigrants from different nations around the world, with each immigrant group retaining certain distinctive characteristics while blending their people and cultures into the American fabric, together forming a new cultural entity and pursuing the "American dream." Today, this story is being rewritten. Whether America can continue to be a multicultural "melting pot" has become a defining question for the nation's present and future. **BR**

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Artificial Suns: A New Energy Solution

By Lan Xinzhen

On November 24, the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) launched an international science program for research on burning plasma and released its research plan for the Burning Plasma Experimental Superconducting Tokamak (BEST), also known as an "artificial sun." BEST, a compact fusion experiment device under construction in Hefei, Anhui Province, is designed to demonstrate actual "burning" of deuterium-tritium plasma, a fuel mixture composed of two isotopes of hydrogen.

With the core objective of achieving power generation through controlled compact nuclear fusion, the construction of BEST is planned to be completed by 2027, after which a commercial nuclear fusion power plant will be built by 2050. At that time, China will completely revamp its energy mix and offer the technology as a Chinese solution for global sustainable development.

Currently, the main energy source for human activity remains fossil fuels, and although clean energy technologies are becoming increasingly mature, they are still greatly influenced by natural conditions. The artificial sun, however, uses deuterium, which can be extracted from seawater with reserves sufficient for hundreds of millions of years, and tritium, which can be produced from lithium. These raw materials are safe. In addition, the product of the fusion reaction is helium, which generates no carbon emissions and no radioactive waste. Fusion energy, often hailed as the ideal "ultimate energy source," is the end point of China's current clean power and carbon neutrality goals.

China has made breakthroughs in the research of artificial sun technology. In March this year, an experiment conducted by the CAS achieved a remarkable fusion power generation milestone by maintaining steady-state high-confinement plasma operation for an impressive 1,066 seconds, setting a new world record. Current technologies allow for the extraction of approximately 0.035 grams of deuterium from each liter of seawater, and the energy released through fusion reactions of this amount of deuterium is equivalent to burning 300 liters of gasoline. Once the artificial sun achieves stable operation, it will provide humanity with a virtually inexhaustible energy source. This will ensure the stability and reliability of energy supply, completely breaking the restrictions of energy scarcity, achieving energy self-sufficiency and fundamentally solving the energy crisis. If all countries can obtain sufficient energy from an artificial sun, energy scarcity will no longer be a cause for conflict.

In the coming years, China's artificial sun program will transition from experimentation to demonstration, and from scientific verification to engineering implementation. To accelerate this process, China is making efforts in policy guidance, international cooperation and institutional innovation, and has built an ecosystem that supports the engineering and industrialization of fusion energy. The program is expected to create a market worth nearly 100 billion yuan ($14 billion) over the next five years.

In addition to China, the United States, the European Union, Japan and Russia are also conducting research on artificial suns. China's plan is currently at the forefront globally and provides technical reference for similar programs.

During the launch of the international science program, which took place in Hefei, scientists from more than 10 countries, including China, France, the United Kingdom, Germany and Italy, jointly signed the Hefei Fusion Declaration, calling for open sharing and mutually beneficial cooperation and encouraging researchers in the fusion field to come to China for work, partnerships and research. Against the backdrop of numerous complex challenges facing global scientific cooperation, the declaration aims to transcend boundaries and collaboratively break through the frontiers of basic science for the benefit of all humankind. **BR**

Against the backdrop of numerous complex challenges facing global scientific cooperation, the declaration aims to transcend boundaries and collaboratively break through the frontiers of basic science for the benefit of all humankind

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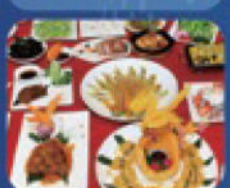

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The Advantages Of Access

China boosts private investment in major sectors By Li Xiaoyang

In November, track-laying began for the Wenling-Yuhuan section of the Hangzhou-Taizhou high-speed railway in Zhejiang Province—China's first high-speed rail line controlled by private capital, which became operational in 2022. Both Wenling and Yuhuan are county-level cities administered by the prefecture-level Taizhou City, and Hangzhou is capital of Zhejiang.

The Hangzhou-Taizhou line is among China's first group of high-speed railway projects funded by a public-private partnership (PPP), with 51 percent of its shares held by a consortium of eight private enterprises and the rest by the state-owned China State Railway Group Co. Ltd. and the local provincial and municipal governments. The construction of its 266.9-km original section began in 2017 and the track-laying work was completed in June 2021.

China has mainly relied on government investment for railway construction, especially high-speed railways. But in recent years, the sector, characterized by high costs, long return on investment cycle and huge maintenance expenses, has been opened to private investment. In 2016, the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) announced the first batch of eight PPP railway projects, the Hangzhou-Taizhou line being one.

As part of the latest government measures to boost private investment, more privately funded railway and other infrastructure projects will be launched.

In November, the General Office of the State Council, China's highest state administrative organ, released a notice to unveil the measures, including supporting the participation of private capital in key projects in areas including rail and nuclear power, which require approval or verification from the authorities and are profit generating. The document also states that private investors may hold a stake of over 10 percent in eligible projects.

Private capital is also encouraged to participate in the construction and operation of new urban infrastructure, the low-altitude economy (defined as economic activities in airspace below 1,000 meters) and commercial aerospace projects, the notice said.

It also emphasizes removing access restrictions for market entities in the services sectors, empowering small and medium-sized enterprises through digital transformation and allowing more qualified private investment projects to issue real estate investment trusts (REITs) in the infrastructure sector. Infrastructure REITs allow companies to monetize their infrastructure assets and apply the sale proceeds to finance future projects or reduce debts, according to a report from Moody's Investors Service.

Boosting private investment is crucial for driving economic growth, and enhancing the resilience and security of industrial and supply chains, Yang Ping, a researcher with the Macroeconomic Research Institute of the NDRC, said at a recent symposium held by the institute.

Dynamic private investment signals positive market expectations, which will drive employment and boost consumption, she added.

Private participation

The first detachable electric aircraft of Land Aircraft Carrier flying vehicle developed by urban air mobility startup Aridge, previously known as XPENG AEROHT, rolled off the production line at its plant in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, in early November. It is the world's first production line for the trial production of flying cars. The flying car comprises a ground van and an electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) aircraft.

Headquartered in Guangzhou, Aridge specializes in developing eVTOL vehicles, aiming to provide efficient point-to-point independent travel. It is now Asia's largest flying car company.

According to the company, the plant is designed with an annual capacity of 10,000 units, with an initial-phase capacity of 5,000 units. Once operating at full capacity, one flying vehicle will roll off the assembly line every 30 minutes.

The emerging low-altitude economy in China is witnessing a surge in participation by private enterprises like Aridge. Guangzhou alone is home to over 300 companies operating within the low-altitude industry.

"Today, China's low-altitude economy is developing rapidly with booming enterprises focusing on differentiated sectors," Qiu Mingquan, Vice President of Aridge, told *Beijing Review*.

The major technological barrier of flying vehicles lies in improving production efficiency while controlling costs, according to Qiu. Aridge has conducted extensive research and development (R&D) on core technologies, and achieved mass production of self-developed carbon fiber components.

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Visitors at the booth of Aridge, an urban air mobility startup, at the Fifth China International Consumer Products Expo in Haikou, Hainan Province, on April 13

Through leveraging China's intelligent car industrial chains, flying car producers can shorten the cycle from R&D and testing to mass production, Qiu said.

He added that Aridge has signed strategic cooperation agreements with local governments to build trial flight and testing bases, explore the application of unmanned aircraft in logistics and tourism, and expand operation, leasing and maintenance services for flying cars.

As the eVTOL industry is shifting from R&D to commercialization, Qiu called on the government to play a leading role in building low-altitude infrastructure and move faster to improve related laws, regulations and supporting policies. Companies and related government departments need to work together to build more takeoff and landing sites and demonstration zones, he added.

New energy is another sector with expanding private participation. Located under some of China's sunniest skies, the photovoltaic (PV) industry in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region is developing rapidly, and the proportion of electricity generated by renewable energy there is among the highest in the country. LONGi Green Energy Technology, a world leading supplier of PV solutions, is among the private companies that have contributed substantially to the green transition.

Through adopting LONGi's PV facilities, a power plant in Ningxia's Lingwu City generates about more than 328 million kilowatt-hours of power annually. Each year, the project replaces 115,000 tons of standard coal equivalent, cutting roughly 10,000 tons of sulfur dioxide and 300,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions.

The LONGi monocrystalline modules used in this project provide enhanced power generation capacity and reliability across diverse climates. These installations boost electricity output and lower power costs, and also help expand vegetation coverage by reducing water evaporation and mitigating strong winds, according to the company. Annual water evaporation in the area can be up to nine times the local rainfall.

As grassland conditions improve, the region has also implemented a model of grazing sheep beneath the solar panels, further increasing income for local farmers.

Removing barriers

Currently, over 60 percent of China's A-share listed companies are private enterprises. In particular, private companies account for 74 percent of listings on the Nasdaq-style Science and Technology Innovation Board at the Shanghai Stock Exchange, known as STAR Market, according to a report by the state broadcaster China Central Television.

In recent years, China has introduced regulations, laws and supportive policies to create a more favorable market environment for private investment. In May, the country's first fundamental law specifically focusing on promoting the private economy came into effect. The law provides legal provisions on breaking down barriers, optimizing services and guiding financial institutions to increase support for private enterprises.

China's financial system has also been expanding financing access for private companies. According to the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, outstanding inclusive loans for small and micro enterprises, mostly private businesses, surged from 15.1 trillion yuan ($2.1 trillion) at the end of 2020 to 35.6 trillion yuan ($5 trillion) by the end of June.

According to Yang, the global economic slowdowns and external technological containment create pressure on some private enterprises in the short term, but the large Chinese market and its talent pool are able to hedge against external volatility.

"During the shift to new growth drivers, private enterprises are adjusting their investment strategies to adapt to the new innovation landscape. The more cautious decisions of private investors and a phased slowdown in investment growth are driven by market changes, but the trend will turn around as the new industrial ecosystem matures," she said.

The Communist Party of China Central Committee's recommendations for formulating the country's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), unveiled in October, state that efforts will be made to improve the long-term mechanisms for facilitating the participation of private enterprises in major projects and better leverage the guiding role of government investment funds, so as to spur private investment, increase its overall share and boost growth momentum for market-driven effective investment. "The document suggests that private investment is embracing broader development opportunities," Yang said. **BR**

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From a Delay to a Relay

When a crack was found on their spacecraft, the return of three Chinese astronauts was put on hold, triggering China's first emergency space rescue launch By Yuan Yuan

One day before their scheduled return to Earth, the three astronauts aboard China's *Shenzhou-20* spacecraft noticed something unusual along the edge of a viewport: a small, triangular mark resembling a paint smudge.

The crew immediately documented the flaw, photographing it from multiple angles under different lighting conditions, while the space station's robotic arm cameras captured additional external images.

Once the pictures reached the ground, engineers urgently analyzed the damage. It was later identified as a penetrating crack. According to Jia Shijin, chief designer of the manned spacecraft system, with the China Academy of Space Technology, the crack was likely caused by space debris no larger than a millimeter, traveling at extremely high speed.

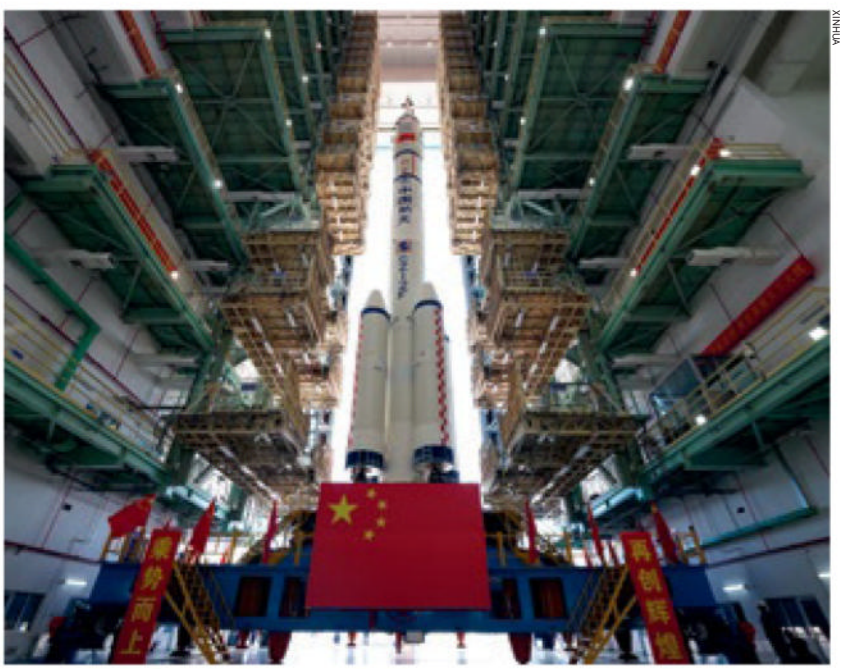
"The probability of a spacecraft being hit by debris is already very low," Jia told Xinhua News Agency. "The chance of it striking the viewport is even lower. So when we first saw it, we found it hard to believe."

This unexpected discovery brought the crew's scheduled homecoming to an abrupt pause.

The first-ever delay

Ground control immediately launched a rigorous investigation. Teams scoured every design document, manufacturing record and test report related to the viewport. They also commissioned two independent research institutes to perform new wind tunnel verifications. "In the end, we confirmed that the design, the plans and all our ground tests were flawless," Jia said. "The most probable culprit was space debris."

Jia outlined a grave worst-case scenario: The cracks could spread, causing the outer pane to detach. This would compromise the inner pressure-sealing layer, leading to rapid cabin depressurization—a catastrophic event.



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The combined *Shenzhou-22* spacecraft and Long March-2F Y22 carrier rocket await transfer to the launch pad at Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in Gansu Province on November 20

In fewer than 12 hours after confirming the crack's severity, mission command made a historic call on November 5: *Shenzhou-20*'s return was called off.

This decision created an unprecedented situation in orbit. The *Shenzhou-21* spacecraft had already arrived at the *Tiangong* space station on November 1 with a fresh crew for a standard handover. Now, with *Shenzhou-20*'s delay, the two crews—totaling six astronauts—were sharing the space station. Their "space reunion" far exceeded the five-day overlap typical of all previous ones.

Even the mission's smallest participants were affected. Four mice, which had arrived with *Shenzhou-21* for a planned five-to-seven-day experiment, found their "short business trip" extended into an open-ended stay.

"Manned spaceflight is inherently high-risk. That reality never changes," Wu Dawei from the China Astronaut Research and Training Center, told China Central Television. "The crew is in daily contact with us and has shown no special anxiety. The station is well-supplied, all systems are normal. We have a new risk point, but it has caused no substantive damage. Operations continue normally."

Concurrently, ground control urgently commenced preparations for the return of the three *Shenzhou-20* astronauts. Ji Qiming, spokesperson for the program, explained that since the *Shenzhou-12* mission in 2021, China's manned spaceflight has adopted a "rolling backup" model, with one combination of the spaceship and rocket for launch and another combination designated as backup for each mission. This ensures that a backup combination of launch vehicle and spaceship is always on standby, ready to be rapidly deployed for an emergency space station rescue mission.

This foresight extended to training. The *Shenzhou-20* crew had rehearsed using the *Shenzhou-21* spacecraft, just as the *Shenzhou-21* crew was fully trained on *Shenzhou-22*. When *Shenzhou-20*'s issue was confirmed, the *Shenzhou-22* spacecraft—the designated backup for *Shenzhou-21*—was already on standby at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in Gansu Province.

On November 10, the project officially activated its emergency plan and measures. The decision: The *Shenzhou-20* astronauts would return in the *Shenzhou-21* spacecraft, while a 16-day countdown began for the emergency launch of the vital *Shenzhou-22*.

Gearing up

The Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center rushed into emergency mode. A standard launch preparation for a Long March-2F rocket typically takes over a month. The team had just launched *Shenzhou-21* on October 31—a mere five days before the *Shenzhou-20* anomaly was confirmed. Now, they were tasked with doing it again in just 16 days, necessitating a drastic streamlining of every procedure.

As the emergency plan took effect, the spacecraft design and development team also accelerated to an unprecedented pace. Their challenge was to manage five critical paths in parallel: the return of *Shenzhou-21*, the launch of *Shenzhou-22*, the eventual retrieval plan for *Shenzhou-20*, and the expedited rollout of the *Shenzhou-23* and *Shenzhou-24* spacecraft.

Launching *Shenzhou-22* without a crew introduced unique complexities. Jia pointed out that the absence of astronauts required significant mission redesign. "Tasks designed for in-orbit crew operation had to be re-engineered. Contingency plans that relied on human intervention needed complete overhaul," he explained.

A group picture of the crews of *Shenzhou-20* and *Shenzhou-21* spaceships captured at Beijing Aerospace Control Center on November 1

The tension was eased significantly on November 14, when the *Shenzhou-21* return capsule touched down safely at the Dongfeng Landing Site in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. Ground search and rescue teams, which had been drilling relentlessly with updated trajectories and response routes, executed a flawless recovery.

After nine anxious days, the three *Shenzhou-20* astronauts were finally home. The four experimental mice accompanying them also emerged from the capsule in perfect health.

Then, on November 25, the Long March-2F Y22 carrier rocket roared into the sky at Jiuquan, carrying the uncrewed *Shenzhou-22* spacecraft. This launch was historic: the program's first-ever emergency rescue mission. The spacecraft carried vital supplies—food, medicine, fresh produce and the specialized equipment needed to repair the cracked viewport on *Shenzhou-20*, which would later return to Earth autonomously.

This crisis-driven tempo rippled through the entire program. The development schedule for subsequent spacecraft was aggressively accelerated. *Shenzhou-23*'s rollout was pulled forward by two months to January next year, and work on *Shenzhou-24* was intensified for a summer delivery.

This sequence created a unique historical footnote. Since astronaut crews are numbered for their mission spacecraft, the next team will be the "*Shenzhou-23* crew." The "*Shenzhou-22* crew" will remain permanently vacant in the official register.

Chief designer Jia emphasized the ever-present uncertainties of the space environment, citing the escalating threat of space debris to spacecraft and crew. Confronting this challenge, he noted, is the critical work that lies ahead.

"Our only path forward is not only to uphold our standards, but to raise them," Jia concluded. "That is the only guarantee of success for the missions to come." **BR**

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Reuse, Recycle, Reinvent

China's multi-faceted approach to power battery recycling By Ji Jing

With the vigorous growth of the new-energy vehicle (NEV) industry, China has emerged as a global leader in both power battery production and consumption. Based on estimated battery lifespans, China is on the cusp of a significant phase of power battery retirement. State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR) statistics indicate that in 2024, China's retired power batteries amounted to approximately 400,000 tons, with recycling volumes exceeding 300,000 tons, representing a market size of over 48 billion yuan ($6.8 billion).

Xu Guangjian, a public policy professor at the School of Public Administration and Policy of Renmin University of China, explained to *People's Daily* that waste power battery recycling and utilization primarily follow two models: resource recovery through the extraction of valuable raw materials like lithium, cobalt and nickel, and secondary applications where batteries are tested, disassembled and reassembled for uses such as emergency power sources or energy storage equipment.

"Power batteries are rich in critical strategic resources such as lithium, cobalt and nickel," Liu Hongsheng, an official with the SAMR, told *People's Daily*. Improper handling of these metals from spent batteries poses significant safety risks, including fires and explosions. Furthermore, the heavy metals and hazardous substances present can lead to severe pollution of soil, water and air.

However, these critical metals are precisely resources China has a high demand for. Used power batteries can contain substantially higher concentrations of these metals than virgin ore, presenting an immense opportunity if effectively utilized—akin to discovering a new mineral source. Efficient extraction and regeneration of these vital metals can significantly reduce reliance on mining and imports.

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A guest experiences an electric flying car at the 2025 World Power Battery Conference in Yibin City, Sichuan Province, on November 12

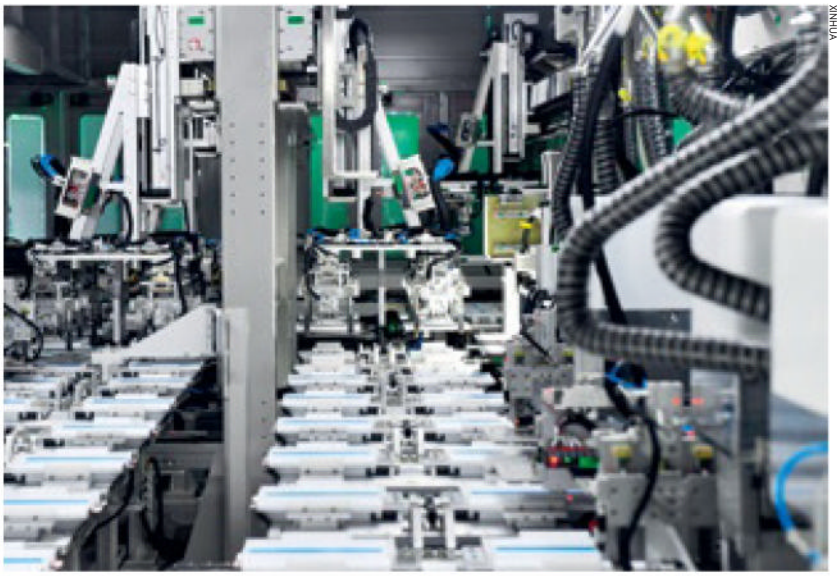
Disorderly growth

China produced over 13 million NEVs in 2024, maintaining its global top position for 10 consecutive years. Despite the vast potential of China's power battery recycling market, a pressing issue is the lack of standardization in recycling and utilization practices.

The soaring prices of essential battery resources like lithium, cobalt and nickel have fueled a dramatic increase in the number of waste power battery recyclers. Corporate information provider Tianyancha reports approximately 196,000 battery recycling enterprises exist in China. Over the past five years, newly registered related enterprises have steadily climbed, peaking in 2024 with over 38,000 new registrations. As of November 18 of this year, 36,000 new companies had registered, a 14.5-percent increase compared to the same period in 2023.

Zhu Liyang, President of the China Association of Circular Economy, told *Economic Daily* that while this indicates an industry boom, it also presents the challenges of disorderly competition.

To guide industry development, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology has released a "white list" of 156 enterprises that meet industry standards. However, legitimate recycling companies are facing a "starvation" dilemma. Li Zhenbiao, Director of the Circular Economy Research Center at the China Automotive Strategy and Policy Research Center, told *People's Daily* that waste power batteries are often sold via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An assembly line of a power battery company in Liuzhou City, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, on May 10, 2024

auction to the highest bidder. This allows smaller recyclers, who invest less in environmental protection and safety, to outbid compliant companies.

Fu Qiang, President of Battery Science and Technology Co. Ltd., noted that "white list" enterprises have a combined annual processing capacity exceeding 1 million tons, with plans for over 4.25 million tons. Yet, most are operating below full capacity.

Many car owners desire a more consumer-friendly recycling system. A Beijing-based NEV owner surnamed He told *People's Daily*, "For example, when buying a car, 4S stores (full service car dealerships offering sales, spare parts, services and surveys) could provide clear recycling guidelines and a dedicated contact, or we could use a one-click reservation via the car manufacturer's app. This way, we'd know who to contact and how to hand over batteries, preventing people from cutting corners or selling to unreliable channels for a higher price."

Furthermore, power battery recycling is hampered by suboptimal technological levels. Disassembly currently relies heavily on manual labor, which is inefficient, costly, and poses significant risks of short circuits, leakage, fires and explosions. The processing equipment is also rudimentary, and a mature, efficient comprehensive utilization system has yet to be established.

Solutions

In response, the State Council, China's highest state administrative organ, approved an action plan in February to improve the used NEV power battery recycling system. The plan aims to create a standardized, safe and efficient recycling and utilization framework, ensuring power batteries are traceable throughout their entire lifecycle, from production and sales to disassembly and utilization.

Addressing market irregularities, the SAMR has issued a suite of national standards for power battery recycling and utilization. These include detailed guidelines for recycling outlets of power batteries, covering site selection, facilities and personnel. For black mass, a fine, powder-like mixture obtained during the process of recycling lithium-ion batteries, a lack of unified technical standards has impacted metal extraction. The Regenerated Black Mass for Lithium-ion Batteries national standard now defines its properties, classification, chemical composition and hazardous substance limits, aiming to enhance downstream smelting safety and environmental friendliness. Furthermore, the ministry also sets standards for recovery: no less than 98 percent for nickel, cobalt and manganese, and no less than 85 percent for lithium.

"Technological innovation is the most urgent task for enterprises," Zhang Yuping, President of Wuhan Power Battery Recycling Technology Co. Ltd., told *Economic Daily*. He emphasized that with the continuous emergence of new material batteries, companies must develop advanced technologies to meet diverse recycling needs.

Echoing the need for innovation, Cao Wenyu, Deputy General Manager of BYD Co. Ltd.'s Second Business Division, told *China Industry News*, "We integrate the concept of 'easily dismantlable and recyclable' into our entire vehicle design, providing convenience for recycling from the source."

Beyond technological advancements, institutional refinement is also vital. In an interview with *China Industry News*, Wang Jianxin, Vice Chairman and Executive Secretary General of the China Battery Industry Association, advocated for an Extended Producer Responsibility system. This policy would assign responsibility for the battery's full journey—from production to recycling—to the manufacturers. Practically, this entails "vehicle-battery separation," where the battery is purchased independently, making the battery producer liable for its maintenance, servicing and insurance. This approach aims to alleviate user concerns, such as the high cost of NEV insurance, while ensuring responsible usage and effective recovery. **BR**

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An Ambitious Strategy For Growth

Chengdu is betting big on hi-tech industries By Pan Xiaoqiao

This year's animated blockbuster *Ne Zha 2* was the world's highest-grossing animated film of all time. But few people know this hit movie was produced in Chengdu, the capital city of Sichuan Province, which is famous for giant pandas. The core creative team of the *Ne Zha* series, Chengdu Cococartoon Animation Film and Television Co. Ltd. (Cococartoon), is located in Tianfu Long Island Digital Cultural and Creative Park (Tianfu Park) in Chengdu's Hi-Tech Zone. Also located at the park are more than 60 other companies specializing in digital cultural and creative industries, forming an industrial cluster.

High-tech prowess

In 2019, Jiaokeli Animation Studio was upgraded from a small animation team into Cococartoon, a large-scale animation company capable of creating animated films. In the same year, the Tianfu Park was opened. Later, some animation companies moved into it. Morevfx, which supported the realization of the film's top-tier special effects, is only five minutes' walk away from Cococartoon. If the latter comes up with a special effect idea, its creative team can walk directly to Morevfx and soon see how their idea plays out.

To shore up this industry, this May, Chengdu launched China's first targeted support program focused specifically on cultivating digital cultural and creative startups, to provide the sector with systematic assistance across space, funding, operational scenarios and human resources. Within less than a decade, the Tianfu Park has already grown into a digital cultural and creative base led by gaming and e-sports, animation, film and television, with coordinated development in digital music, ultra-high-definition video and other sectors, gathering a working staff of around 6,000 people.

Chengdu's hi-tech stories exist far beyond the digital cultural and creative industry. In July 2023, the Communist Party of China Sichuan Provincial Committee released a document intended to promote new-type industrialization and accelerate the growth of a modern industrial system covering nine major industrial clusters like culture and tourism, pharmaceutical and healthcare, advanced energy technology and electronic information.

Chengdu hosts many universities and research institutions and is home to some of China's leading medical facilities, like West China Hospital of Sichuan University. It thus possesses research capabilities in biomedicine and medical engineering. In September 2021, the construction of the City of Future Medicine was launched in Chengdu Eastern New Area.

Chengdu Tianfu Jincheng Frontier Medical Equipment Research Institute, which is based in the city, is a specialized platform dedicated to the commercialization of medical research achievements and focuses on tackling key medical difficulties and bottlenecks.

Wu Zhe, a professor at the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China and Director of the research institute, said in a group interview on November 27 that most of the institute's technological achievements stem from cooperation with local hospitals, as it mainly provides solutions to clinical medical problems that the hospitals report. Wu said the institute is also working to make smaller, smarter medical devices that can be controlled remotely. He has been working on this for more than a decade and back in his lab at the university, he has developed the first micro ultrasonic instrument in China.

Compared with high-end professional ultrasonic instruments, which usually cost millions, the portable ultrasonic instruments developed by this institute, around the size of a cellphone, are much more affordable and convenient to use. The instruments have so far been adopted by a dozen public health centers in the Eastern New Area.

According to professor Wu, the institute's ultrasonic instruments have been exported to Peru through cooperation with the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru. These instruments are mainly used to examine the health of women in medical stations deep in the Amazon rainforest, and as the instruments are connected through remote means to hospitals in the capital city, images can be examined by professional doctors.

While some of the institute's research results are already widely used in hospitals, more research is underway, which is expected to bring more advanced medical equipment and solutions to health problems.

All-dimensional support

In the summer of 2013, a new team joined the Chengdu Digital New Media Innovation and Incubation Base. It was Cococartoon's predecessor Jiaokeli Animation Studio. Back at that time, the company only had a few employees, and although they

COURTESY PHOTO

A group of international experts visit the exhibition hall of the City of Future Medicine in the Hi-Tech Zone of Chengdu, Sichuan Province, on November 27

were planning to make the film *Ne Zha*, the team lacked personnel, technology support and especially funding.

Fortunately, the team benefited from Chengdu's new policy aimed at strengthening startups by offering financing, technology sharing, rent waivers and resources matching.

Dedicated platforms also assist in the commercialization of sci-tech research achievements. The Hi-tech Zone Hummingbird Pilot Research and Development Technology Service Platform has served more than 500 research teams and enterprises, helping to commercialize over 300 scientific research achievements, and maintaining close collaboration with 28 prestigious universities and research institutes. The platform has an in-house research team and also employs outside experts and talents when necessary.

Liu Zixuan, an employee of the platform, explained to *Beijing Review* how a new material invented by a professor from Sichuan University, which did not sell well at first, became a hit in the market with the platform's help.

The material, which absorbs and releases carbon dioxide, was initially designed to regulate the content of oxygen and carbon dioxide in vegetable greenhouses, but it was poorly received by the market. When the professor turned to Hummingbird, the latter redesigned the material as a mosquito hunter, as mosquitoes are very sensitive to carbon dioxide. The new product, air suction insecticidal lamp, is very popular with users and was even adopted by Chengdu 2021 FISU World University Games in major venues and the Universiade Village, and also in many parks and residential compounds in Chengdu. "The list of such stories is very long," Liu said.

Cherishing talents

Between 2022 and 2024, Chengdu attracted more than 1.56 million young talents. Its drawcards include its comfortable and relaxed living environment, lower living costs than major coastal cities, as well as various subsidies and rent waivers for qualified personnel. However, Chengdu appeals not only to Chinese talents. According to the findings of a 2024 survey released by the Foreign Talent Research Center, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security (MHRSS), Chengdu ranked the fifth in its appeal for foreign talents, outperformed only by Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hangzhou.

Lutz Gunther Plümer from Germany came to Chengdu in 2018 as a freshly retired professor of Geoinformation and AI at the University of Bonn. Awarded the title of "Academician of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences," he now serves as an adjunct professor at the Faculty of Geosciences and Engineering in Southwest Jiaotong University, where he led the research of a new vacuum system that, integrated with AI technology, delivers fully automated operation and is applied in cutting-edge fields such as aerospace, aviation and micro-electronics.

"I discovered an unexpected home here in Chengdu—a city that redefined my understanding of progress and belonging," Plümer said during the Chengdu 2025 Foreign Experts Symposium in November. "The people here embody a rare balance: open-hearted toward foreigners like myself, fiercely hardworking, yet always making time for life's joys."

Matt Vegh, a Canadian national, is now the chairman of Confluence Universe, a Canadian company working in the field of Quantum AI. He came to China in the early 2000s, serving as the director of the Chengdu branch of a Canadian business in Shanghai.

"The city excels in two essential paradigms: trust and livability. These are the conditions that allow foreigners to stay for 10 or 20 years, build families, and contribute their best ideas," Vegh said during in the Foreign Experts Symposium.

When talking about his experience in Chengdu, Vegh told *Beijing Review* that he is proud to have been a founding foreign editor of *Chengdu Daily* in 2001 and to have five of his works published in China. He has also authored a white paper for the Chengdu Municipal Government.

During the symposium, Xu Jiajun, Deputy Director of the Foreign Talent Research Center of the MHRSS, told attendees, "International talents have made essential and indispensable contributions to China's modernization. It is precisely through their participation that China can better build itself into a global sci-tech powerhouse. At the same time, China's modernization drive also offers a wide platform for international talents. We are drawn to each other and are achieving success in tandem." **BR**

(*Reporting from Chengdu, Sichuan Province*)

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左权

DISCOVER ZUOQUAN

A summer resort in the Taihang Mountains

A revolutionary tradition

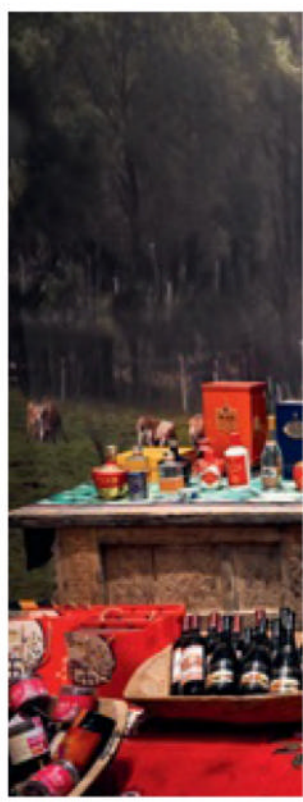
A thriving economy

A view of Zuoquan Lake

THROUGH THEIR EYES

People from around the world take you on a journey to rediscover China

Hotan Heritage



The China National Arts and Crafts Museum in Beijing is hosting an exhibition of intangible cultural heritage from Hotan Prefecture in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. Held to celebrate the autonomous region's 70th anniversary, the exhibition features over 600 artifacts representing around 30 forms of intangible cultural heritage. Hotan was once not only a major hub of the Silk Road, but also the starting point of the Jade Road, which came into existence thousands of years before silk was first traded. **BR**

(*Text and photos by Wei Yao*)

1. Instruments of the Twelve Muqam, a genre of Muqam—a multifaceted Uygur performance art blending elements of singing, dancing and music—popular in places such as Kashgar and Hotan

2. A loom used to make Hotan handwoven carpets on display at the museum

3. Distinctively patterned Atlas silk hangs in a hall of the museum. Hotan is one of the major producers of this textile, which is traditionally made by the region's Uygur people

4. A teapot crafted by artist Gao Yijin from Hotan white jade, considered to be one of China's finest varieties of jade

5. Local specialty food items from Hotan on display at the museum

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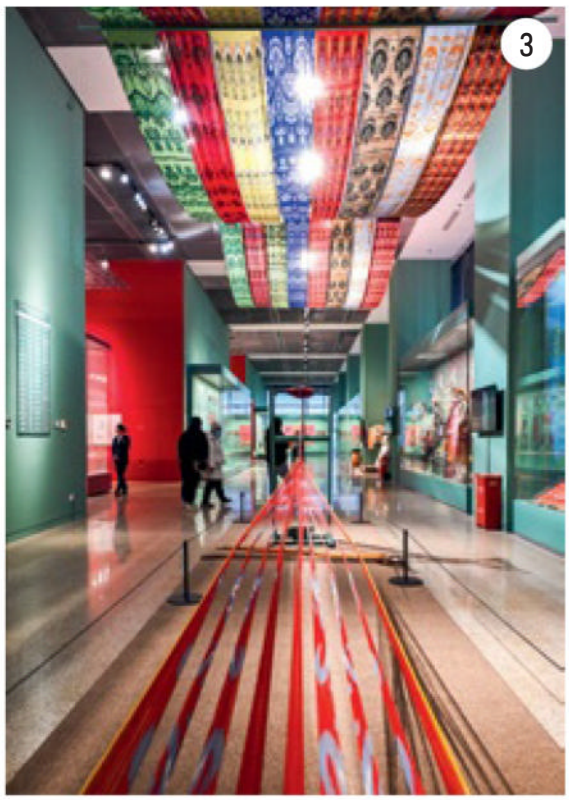
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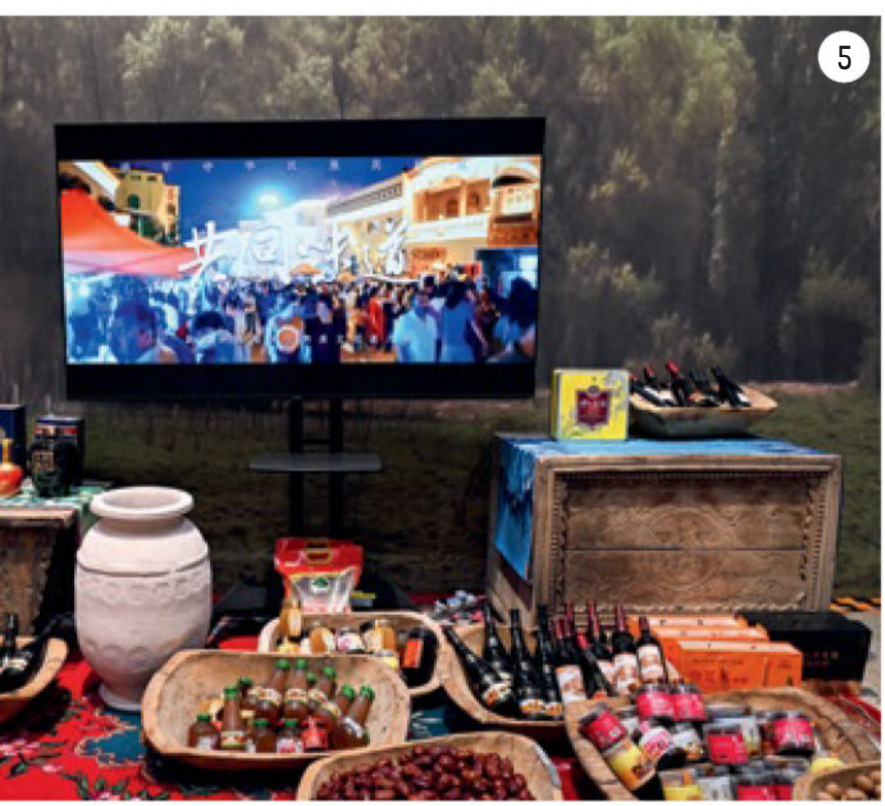
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4

Where Tradition Meets Modernity

By Shah Dad Hasil

"Hello, this is your captain speaking. We are now flying over Chengdu, China…"

The voice gently nudged me awake. Through the window, a meticulously planned city unfolded below—clean, green and serene. Chengdu Tianfu International Airport (TFU) gleamed like a vast, modern sculpture. At an altitude of more than 10,000 meters, my new life was beginning.

I come from Balochistan, where silence often speaks of absence—of opportunity, infrastructure, light. Stepping into TFU, I encountered order: bright signboards, clean floors and people moving with calm purpose. My first Didi—a leading online ride-hailing service—ride was in a sleek electric car. The cheerful driver chatted warmly in Chinese. I smiled and replied with my few phrases. It was a confusing yet joyful start.

Using Baidu Maps, I realized how much I had to learn. It felt alive—detailed, responsive, showing nearby charging stations and real-time traffic. As we drove through Chengdu, technology hummed quietly in the background, allowing trees and rivers to take center stage. The city felt peaceful, human.

By evening, I entered my university campus at the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China (UESTC) via facial recognition. A smile from the receptionist and a set of keys welcomed me into a new rhythm of life.

My first morning in Chengdu, I explored the university—a vibrant city within a city. The commercial street was a world of orderly shops, silent vending machines and purposeful students.

Getting a local SIM card was poetically simple. Moments later, I experienced 5G—not as a future concept, but as a present reality, streaming high-definition videos instantly.

At the canteen, I scanned a QR code to pay—no cash. My first mobile payment felt like stepping into a new system. The food was spicy, the noodles slippery, the chopsticks challenging, but it was deliciously new.

COURTESY PHOTO

Shah Dad Hasil (left) and a fellow student participate in a study tour focusing on the robotics sector in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, in June

Renting a shared bicycle for just 2 yuan ($0.28) with a simple scan filled me with wonder. Riding through Chengdu, wind in my face, felt like discovering a secret.

By my third day, I began seeing the quieter soul of this campus. In the shared kitchen, every spot was taken—a quiet choreography of students cooking. My roommate simply ordered breakfast online. "You can order fresh vegetables, too, delivered tomorrow," he said. I was humbled; this was a quiet revolution in daily life.

We explored Taobao and Pinduoduo—not just shopping apps, but entire digital ecosystems. Picking up parcels from an open, unmanned collection center left me in thoughtful silence. Here, trust was woven into the system.

Outside, the streets were stunningly orderly—no honking, no running red lights. City registration at the police station took two minutes, warm and efficient.

The subway felt like a portal—deep, clean and incredibly fast. Our medical checkup was fully digitized, smooth and completed in under an hour. Stepping back outside, I breathed deeply. This is the real China.

At Tianfu Square, a giant 3D panda leaped from a massive screen, enchanting the crowd. It felt like magic woven from technology. In the Chengdu Museum, every exhibit whispered of history and identity. "They have not forgotten who they were," I thought.

Visiting the ancient Jianmen Pass, I felt history in the stones and the breeze. China, I realized, was not just speed and innovation—it was also memory and soul.

Through every experience—the spicy noodles, the silent subways, the lamplit walks—something in me changed. I came for technology but found discipline, order and intention. Every corner was built with vision.

Back home in Balochistan, I had dreamed of helping build a better future. Here, I saw what that dream could look like—a society that trusts its people, invests in its youth and ensures progress reaches everyone.

Walking back to my dorm one night, under the same moon that shines over Quetta, I felt it closer somehow. One day, I will return home. I will not just carry a degree. I will carry a vision—a quiet, growing whisper of tomorrow. **BR**

The author is a Pakistani pursuing a master's degree in computer science and technology at UESTC in Chengdu, Sichuan Province. The article is an edited version of an award-winning piece in the 2025 China in My Eyes—China's Digital Development in My Eyes Essay Contest organized by UESTC
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